

## A TOUCH OF HOME

Ask any one who ever served overseas in the U. S. military and he or she will tell you about the need for anything that can boost morale in a stressful and sometimes dangerous job. World War II, Korea, Vietnam or Iraq, the need is no different, no matter where or when. Just as an hour of listening to a Bob Hope comedy relieved the strain of Army life in 1941, an NCO club full of GIs watching an NFL football game on TV does today. Just as the doughboy was cautioned to take medicines in the jungles of World War II, today's soldier learns about AIDS through the media of Armed Forces Radio and Television.

It began with a proverbial handful of G.I.'s erecting a "Rube Goldberg" contraption to broadcast "pop music" to their buddies in the barracks. In 50 short years it has become a worldwide satellite radio and television system providing G.I.'s around the globe with the sounds and sights of home.

Along the way, the "by soldiers, for soldiers" has conceived a saga as full of folklore as any in our country's history. It's a story of humble beginnings, of struggle, of political intrigue. It's a story of characters, human and animated, full of American wit and personality. It's a story of movie stars, of big Hollywood creations and silly little skits. Most of all, it's a story of warm and selfless compassion, full of tragedy and joy, defeat and victory. It's the story of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS).

In war or peace, the mission of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service has remained the same: to provide a touch of home through military news and entertainment to the United States military wherever it has ventured. From Iceland to Antarctica, from South Korea to Germany from Japan to Panama, AFRTS is there.

Today, AFRTS provides the most popular of America's radio and television news, sports and entertainment programming to Department of Defense (DoD) personnel and their families in over 130 countries and U. S. territories worldwide. Its audiences see programs much the same as they are broadcast in the U. S., without censorship, propagandizing or manipulation.

Program owners and syndicators in the private sector make their very valuable products available to the AFRTS at a fraction of the cost that commercial stations would normally pay. Many provide their programs free of charge. The service exercises no control over the content

of this material, but it does delete commercials and replaces them with DoD internal and public service announcements (PSA's).

The heart of the AFRTS operation today is the Broadcast Center located in Sun Valley, California. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the AFRTS Broadcast Center (AFRTS-BC) distributes radio programs consisting of news, special events coverage, commentary, music and of course, play-by-play sports. Major networks like ABC, NBC, CBS, Mutual, National Public Radio, AP, and UPI provide newscasts directly. Besides the excellent entertainment programs provided by syndicators, AFRTS-BC distributes some musical programs that they produce "in-house." These include programs that present the most popular new recordings in all musical categories. From the Broadcast Center radio and television programming goes out worldwide by a network of satellites, both domestic and international, for time-sensitive programs and tape or disk shipments.

As the reader will discover, it was the very inventive nature of the U. S. serviceman himself that gave birth to the service we know as AFRTS. As a consequence, the dedicated men and women of AFRTS have never failed in their mission. They resolved to deliver their "information and entertainment" to troops in the combat theater using uncanny creativity that was often required to get it there.

For most of those who have served in the AFRTS, their contribution to military men and women worldwide has enriched their own lives as well. Just as many of them brought to AFRTS a wide range of talents, their service experience contributed to their future careers as well, whether in military or commercial broadcasting or related fields.

Until the United States' involvement in Southeast Asia, few AFRTS personnel had served in frontline combat areas. Only occasionally had armed forces broadcasters found themselves exposed to the threats of German bombing or rocket attacks on London or a counterattack by diehard Japanese defenders on a South Pacific island, although they were always intensely aware of the action and the threats. Those working at the Hollywood location of AFRTS may have lacked a combat environment, however, its staff made up for this with its hard work and commitment to the war effort. They worked day and night to produce the programs for the men in the field.

At one time or another, several of those who worked at Armed Forces Radio in Hollywood during World War II talked about writing a film script or a novel in the manner of *M\*A\*S\*H*. No doubt about it, the clash between the creative chaos of professional broadcasters-turned-soldiers and the military-turned-broadcasters would make for some very funny material. Like in the popular

TV show, real-life, warm and zany anecdotes abound.

A writer for Bob Hope before the war, Sherwood Schwartz, endured the draft, went through eight weeks of basic training, and prepared to transfer to the Aleutian Islands. The day before his unit was to ship out, he received orders to report to the Armed Forces Radio (AFR) headquarters in Hollywood. There he spent the remainder of his military career, writing scripts for such AFRS programs as "Command Performance" and "Mail Call." On occasion, he'd tailor programs for specific entertainers whom soldiers had requested to appear, including Hope. Virtually every Hollywood personality performed on Armed Forces Radio during the war. Certainly, none lacked in their commitment to the war effort.

Clark Gable was a particular case in point. Responding to a request, Schwartz created for Gable and Bob Hope a great "Mail Call" script. In it, they were to exchange little black books containing the names of eligible women. The plot would build up to a double date. Gable would fix up Hope with Dame May Witty, then 80 years old. In turn, Hope would match him with little Margaret O'Brien, age 8. Just imagine these two classic stars with such a funny bit!

Despite the script and his stellar co-performers, Gable had to be talked into doing the show. He held a lofty place in Hollywood stardom, yet, Schwartz recalls, this movie giant "had an absolutely petrifying fear of a live mike." He could perform on a stage, but "was terrified of a microphone." His phobia asserted itself almost immediately after he came out to center stage. There before him was the live soldier audience collected in a Hollywood radio studio. His hand began to tremble. So badly, according to Schwartz, that "all you heard was the script rattling. He couldn't talk. His tongue got stuck in his mouth. He was just terrified. Although Gable was then the number one Hollywood star, you had to feel sorry for the man standing there frozen."

On his part, Bob Hope later expressed wonderment: "Can you imagine a fellow who was that famous and everything, being that nervous about being out in front of the public?" Hope recalled how Gable's "hand was shaking so much that I had to reach across and hold his arm and steady him in front of the audience. There was nothing else you could do because the radio audience didn't know what was happening. He was just not used to personal appearances."

To get his co-star to perform, Hope whispered to Gable, "Clark, we're old friends, these guys love you. I love you. There's nothing to be nervous about. Why don't you go back and come out again?"

So, they started over. Hope held the script so that it wouldn't rattle and gradually Gable relaxed, got into his

role and did the show. Schwartz recalled, "It was a remarkable achievement on Bob's part. Within a minute and a half, he was able to calm Gable down."

Even today, Schwartz remembers it as "a very funny show." (1) If possible, another "Mail Call" made an even more profound impression on the writer. He was asked to produce a program featuring great American composers performing their own works. So, he wrote a script that would include Jimmy McHugh, Johnny Mercer, Sammy Cahn, and the great Jerome Kern. What a cast! But, Kern refused to do the show.

So, Schwartz called him. Kern explained that he thought none of the young kids at the war's front would know him because he considered himself of an older generation. No one there would remember his song, "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes." In response, Schwartz told him, "My God, how could we do a show about the greatest American songwriters without including you?"

After the call, Schwartz went to see him in person, only to find that the songwriter had strengthened his resolve, saying "I tell you, I don't like to appear in public." Schwartz hadn't realized that Kern was a very shy person, "extremely shy." Each time Schwartz would manage to talk him into doing the show, Kern would change his mind again a few days later. Schwartz went back to see him again. This time, Kern displayed a big fever blister that he claimed developed from his nervousness about appearing on the program. As written, the "Mail Call" script had Kern appearing last on the program. Waiting backstage, with the big fever blister on his lip, he was "nervous as can be." Finally, the announcer introduced him to the live military audience. As he came out to center stage and walked up to the microphone, all the way out he received nonstop applause. According to Schwartz, "There was a standing ovation from these men who Kern thought had forgotten him or didn't know who he was. He stood at the microphone and started to cry, tears just streaming down his face. He never even said 'Thank you.' He didn't say anything. He just walked over to the piano...the humblest of men, the most modest of people, a genius, afraid nobody knew him...He just walked over and played "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes.'" Kern's appearance was "a beautiful story of a beautiful man who didn't recognize his own fame." (2)

Most entertainers, of course, had no such problems in appearing in front of audiences. W.C. Fields' deep desire to perform for the troops produced the saddest image that Bob Hope remembers of Armed Forces Radio. Hope was doing a "Command Performance" for which "Fields showed up in a wheel chair. He was ill, but he still wanted to do that "Command Performance." That was the last time I saw him. It just shows his determination and the respect he had for the people in the services." (3)

Whatever effort it took for them to appear, entertainers selflessly gave of themselves so that the American fighting man would be able to listen to his favorite performers and programs. Of course, performing for Armed Forces Radio certainly didn't hurt the careers of aspiring entertainers. To Bob Hope, this was obvious: "There is no doubt about it. I think that the exposure, doing something good like that, was very beneficial to the performers."

Nonetheless, Hope sees this as a secondary reason entertainers have continued to appear for the troops: "Oh, I think it's their hearts that did it. It's a combination of wanting to do it and knowing how important it is to the people that are over there. That's the reason they do it. They open up. It's a beautiful thing." On his part, Hope does acknowledge an ulterior motive: "There's a selfish kind of thing, too. The men pleased me so much. When I went down to March Field in 1941 to do my first military show, that audience was so great. I happened, at that time, to be coming along big in radio and pictures, and I was very popular. That audience was so great, I said, 'Wait a minute. How long has this been going on? I've gotta have more of this.'"(4)

Hope has been getting "more of this" for more than fifty years. To this day, he still performs live and on radio and television for American troops in all corners of the world. To him, such appearances were "always a delight. You get the feeling that you're doing something special for the troops."(5)

Likewise, AFRTS broadcasters have seen their jobs as "doing something for the troops," year after year, whether operating in peacetime Korea, in war-torn Vietnam, or in the busyness of the Los Angeles Broadcast Center. In the normal course of their work, the dedicated people of AFRTS have often performed far beyond the normal call of duty.

It's important to keep in mind two critical elements of

AFRTS' early success: First, a good number of patriotic professionals, who just happened to be very famous stars in the entertainment field, donated a virtual infinity of free labors to America's soldiers and sailors. Their enthusiasm was contagious. A very impressive number of the early contributors worked for "a dollar a year," because they believed in what they were doing.

Second, no reflection on the merits of these pioneer artists would be complete without honoring those young soldier broadcasters of the early years. Their crude and wacky ingenuity was the real inspiration for what has evolved into the largest satellite broadcasting organization the world has ever seen. What marries the earliest broadcasts to the current version, is that all these services are still produced by service people, for service people. That foundation reflects not only the legendary team effort of the U. S. Armed Forces, and the "show must go on" ideal of the performers. It also reflects the very embodiment of the American Spirit itself.

Thus it is the individual efforts of thousands, with a heredity of *esprit de corps*, that bequeathed a half-century legacy of the military's primary morale-building agency, the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. It's an exciting story.

Discover more of the "folklore and history," in the pages following.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 1

- (1) Interview with Sherwood Schwartz, July 14, 1983; Interview with Bob Hope, August 2, 1986.
- (2) Schwartz Interview.
- (3) Hope interview.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.

## BROADCAST BEGINNINGS: BY SOLDIERS FOR SOLDIERS

The U.S. Armed Services have always concerned themselves with the morale of their soldiers in the field – particularly those assigned in foreign countries far away from American diversions and entertainment. During World War I, the Army involved itself with such obvious morale actions as improvement of billets, the granting and extension of leaves and the encouragement of athletics and live entertainment. Private groups, such as the YMCA, the Knights of Columbus, and the American Red Cross supplied a large part of the recreation services for the troops.

In the months after the conclusion of fighting in France in late 1918, General John J. Pershing ordered a study to determine the level of morale of the men in the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF). The study was to establish a system to constantly inform the Headquarters "as to the factors that undermine the morale of the troops, [to be] continually in touch with the shifting situation as regards recreation and kindred needs." Supervised by the G-1 (Personnel) Section of the General Staff, the command could "call to the attention of appropriate Army Sections steps that could improve the spirit of the troops, and to stimulate the work of the nonmilitary societies."<sup>(1)</sup>

The study acknowledged that during the war and even after the Armistice, "In the pressure of more urgent matters, the question of morale had to be given scant attention." As a result, neither the Army nor the private organizations had made any real coordinated effort to provide morale services to the troops. Many of the units in the field were, "Either inadequately served or not served at all, while in other places there [was] duplication and competition between the Societies." In the Northern Argonne Section, for example, it was impossible to "find a single representative of any of the agencies, or even so much as a baseball, a bar of chocolate, or a magazine."<sup>(2)</sup>

However, by the summer of 1919, no less than seven private organizations were working with the United States troops in France. These included the YMCA, the YWCA, the National Catholic War Council (Knights of Columbus), the Jewish Welfare Board, the Salvation Army, the American Library Association and the Red Cross. A report made by civilian War Department official Raymond Fosdick, noted that the organizations functioned directly under the Administrative Section of

General Pershing's staff. He added, "They work hard to coordinate and adjust their lines of work so as to eliminate overlapping and duplication. Added to the tremendous project of education, athletics and entertainment that the Army itself is coordinating, the work of these societies helps to form what is probably the largest and most comprehensive leisure-time program ever undertaken."<sup>(3)</sup>

Fosdick's continuing investigation of the morale problem concluded, "The effort of all this work upon the future citizenship of the United States is incalculable, and the American people can take pride in their own generous participation in its successful prosecution."

Even so, his report expressed serious reservations about the military's use of private organizations to provide the leisure time services to military troops. The sectarian basis of the organizations had led to the stimulation of rivalries and a jockeying of position. That was "disheartening to witness and discouraging to cope with. To see the representatives of these different agencies vying with each other in an attempt to make one last good impression upon their returning troops is to despair of the whole system of social work in the war."<sup>(4)</sup>

If the United States ever had to send men into battle again, Fosdick concluded, the Army would have to take real steps to eliminate "religious stratification." This could be done by "reducing to the lowest possible minimum the number of organizations working directly with the troops in camp or in the field. There is no reason," he said, "a single non-sectarian organization in this war should not have handled the whole problem of recreation of the Army. Morale is as important as ammunition and is just as legitimate a charge against the public treasury."<sup>(5)</sup>

Fosdick felt that recreational facilities provided by the Army itself would satisfy the troops better than those that the private agencies had created. The soldier "is instinctively interested in the thing that he does himself," he said. "The experience of the war shows that the clubs or huts run by the troops themselves were apt to be more popular than those managed by the societies. [Likewise,] the theatrical exhibitions staged by the soldiers created a deeper and wider interest in the camps than the plays of professional talent."<sup>(6)</sup>

This occurred, Fosdick said, because the "soldier is keen to detect and quick to resent any condescension or patronage from those who serve him. He's first of all an American citizen and he asks for no charity." Thus it was time for the Army to take over all leisure-time, morale-building activities from the private enterprise. He argued, "Baseballs and books and all the other factors that make for a rounded life are an essential part of the nation's direct responsibility toward its troops."<sup>(7)</sup>

As the Army returned to peacetime, however, the need for highly organized recreation and entertainment declined in proportion to the reduction in manpower. After the AEF returned to the United States, the Army maintained an overseas presence only in Hawaii, Panama, and the Philippines. Only the latter two locales qualified as "foreign duty stations" where the local language wasn't English.

The Army's primary effort at providing recreation itself centered on organized athletics. This included detailing former West Point football players to Hawaii to supervise the enlisted men's athletic programs. Officers did not participate beyond coaching. Their own recreation focused more on golf and tennis (Schofield Barracks to this day still boasts a great golf course). Other than athletics, the Army of the period left the men to fill their free time themselves.

Like the nation as a whole, soldiers turned more and more to the growing medium of radio following World War I. In the United States, commercial broadcasting supplied the news, sports, and entertainment. The soldier audience received programs only in those areas where a concentration of military facilities existed. In the Philippines and Panama, they could listen to English language stations established there for the U. S. civilians working for the American government and commercial companies.

### PHILIPPINE BEGINNINGS

It was not until February, 1939, that KGEI in San Francisco began beaming shortwave broadcasts to the Philippines with programming oriented to the U.S. military.(8) KGEI had its origins as a General Electric G.E. Company exhibit at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition held on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. The company had developed a state-of-the-art shortwave transmitter equipped with an antenna that could beam broadcasts either west to Asia or south to Latin America from the Exposition's House of Magic. The only problem was that General Electric had no programming for the station to air. When Buck Harris, the company's public relations representative at the Exposition, pointed out the deficiency, G. E. gave him the job of manning the facility and of developing programming. Their only guidance for Harris was to broadcast unbiased news and music to Asia four hours a day, to Latin America three hours a day, and to develop good will.(9)

As a journalist with no radio experience, Harris approached his job much as an editor would running a newspaper city desk. He used news from the wire services and music from transcriptions. He interviewed foreign dignitaries from the Orient or Latin America who visited the Exposition. Almost immediately, cablegrams

and letters began pouring into the studio, reporting on the reception and expressing appreciation for the news and music. Listeners further encouraged KGEI to serve as a counterpoint to the Japanese Radio Tokyo that broadcast throughout Asia. Ultimately, KGEI became the model for the U.S. Government's own shortwave news and entertainment efforts following Pearl Harbor.(10)

In 1942, after the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, KGEI became directly involved in the American military effort. General Douglas MacArthur requested from Bataan that the station broadcast warnings about counterfeit Filipino currency that the Japanese were flooding into the areas they seized. KGEI announcers advised their audience in English and native dialects about the worthless money. "They are doing this in order to strip your stores and farms at no cost to themselves," the announcements said. "Do not accept this counterfeit money made in Japan. Be on your guard." Apparently their announcements made an impact. Within two weeks, the Japanese-controlled station in Manila and Radio Tokyo began transmitting stern warnings. Any Filipino questioning the value of the occupation army's money would be shot or imprisoned.(11)

During the fight for the Philippines, KGEI became the primary source of news and information for MacArthur's men as they waged their losing battle against the Japanese invaders. Using a 1,000-watt transmitter taken from Manila, the American troops set up a small station on Bataan. From there they picked up and then rebroadcast news and entertainment beamed from KGEI in San Francisco. When MacArthur moved his headquarters to Corregidor at the end of December, his men brought the transmitter along.(12)

Manual Quezon, the President of the Philippines, Carlos Romulo, publisher of the *Philippine Herald* and General MacArthur all collaborated to get the new station on the air. Upon arrival on Corregidor, Quezon told Romulo that they needed to put a station on the air as quickly as possible. "We must establish communication with our people and with the men on Bataan," he explained. The two Filipino leaders approached General MacArthur. He agreed and directed his radio technicians to begin broadcasting within 48 hours. By January 1, 1942, they were on the air. When Romulo asked MacArthur for a name for the station, he replied, "*The Voice of Freedom*."(13)

Once in operation, the station concentrated on counteracting propaganda and false information that the Japanese were broadcasting from a captured station in Manila. Broadcasts encouraged those Americans still fighting on Bataan. The programs included commentaries, items of local interest, and selections from phonograph records that the retreating forces had brought with them. Romulo

also broadcast appeals to the Filipino and American people to unite against the Japanese invaders. He later wrote, "Day after day I broadcast over our makeshift radio the words and courage of the stalwart, indomitable MacArthur and the frail, indomitable Quezon." Near the end of the siege, when the President was considering returning to Manila, Romulo broadcast a particularly strong appeal. He modestly recalls, "It was a blockbuster of a broadcast if I may say so. I was desperate and pulled no punches. I declared the Filipinos were fighting as never before, determined to hold on and keep faith in America."<sup>(14)</sup>

Although Quezon ultimately escaped into exile with Romulo, the President immediately criticized his friend's broadcast for offering false hope. One American officer noted that the propaganda on "The Voice of Freedom" was "so thick, it served no purpose except to disgust us and incite mistrust of all hopes." Ironically, the American troops learned of the deteriorating military situation in the Philippines from listening to the more objective broadcasts of KGEI. Each night, KGEI broadcasted a program called "Freedom for the Philippines."<sup>(15)</sup>

#### U. S. MILITARY BROADCAST BEGINNINGS

While MacArthur's "Voice of Freedom" is an important part of early AFRTS history, it was not the first United States military radio station. By the time it began broadcasting from Corregidor in January, 1942, soldiers in the Panama Canal Zone and Alaska had already put stations on the air.

The first station in Panama began as a purely military requirement. The Panama Coast Artillery Command (PCAC) began establishing an extensive defense alert network of fortified emplacements to protect the Canal in early 1940. This included moving antiaircraft units of the 73rd and 83rd Coast Artillery Corps from garrison duty to jungle positions. For communication between the headquarters and the artillerymen scattered throughout the country, the Command used several "picnic type" radio receivers. They located the transmitter for the alert system in the basement of the Panama Coast Artillery Command barracks at Quarry Heights in the Canal Zone. However, the command quickly discovered that either the units in the field were turned off or the soldiers weren't monitoring the radios. Either way, it was impossible to call test alerts.<sup>(16)</sup>

As editor of the *Panama Coast Artillery News*, the local service paper, Sergeant Wayne Woods received a request from the Artillery Command. They needed "maximum publicity" to keep the radios in the field turned on. Woods discussed the problem with Technical Sergeant Joseph Whitehead, who was in charge of the radio transmitter, and with Master Sergeant Paul Doster, the

command Public Relations NCO. The three servicemen came up with an idea. They'd play popular music over the air. Surely, the troops in the outlying positions would be more likely to listen to the radio if it provided entertainment.<sup>(17)</sup>

Major General Sanderford Jarman, Commanding General of the PCAC, liked the idea. He gave the recommendation his "wholehearted approval" and instructed the troop morale officer to get the necessary recordings. Early in 1940, broadcasts began on a regular schedule with Whitehead in charge of the project. The station, manned by three full-time operators, took PCAC as its call letters.<sup>(18)</sup>

PCAC soon took on an additional function. General Jarman wanted more news about current world developments reaching his men in the jungle. With the budding radio station in place, he asked Woods to read news copy over the air. As Woods recalls, the first newscast consisted of his reading the *Panama Star and Herald*, a local morning paper. Each weekday, one of the NCO's read the major stories from the paper. On Sunday, the staff produced a half-hour newscast summarizing the week's news based on stories from the current *Time* magazine.<sup>(19)</sup>

In the beginning, the station operated on a hit-and-miss basis with little idea about what the next day's broadcast schedule would be. Nonetheless, by April, 1941, the morale of the troops had improved remarkably as a result of the music and news. The *Panama Coast Artillery News* began to provide operating funds to the station to ensure regularly scheduled programming.

#### NETWORK PROGRAM BEGINNINGS

As the station became more and more popular among the troops and civilians in the Canal Zone, Master Sergeant Doster, the Public Relations NCO, suggested that the staff get stateside programs to air. Woods had the same idea and he had been in correspondence with members of the radio and motion picture communities. Therefore, he undertook the assignment of writing letters to such radio notables as Jack Benny, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope asking for transcriptions of their broadcasts. According to Woods, the "replies were spontaneous." Jack Benny, for one, offered regular transcriptions at no charge. His program, on an autographed disk, became the first network show to be broadcast.<sup>(20)</sup>

In September, 1941, NBC saluted PCAC in a nationwide hookup with a program featuring many radio stars and personalities. The network followed up this effort by sending 2,000 pounds of transcribed NBC programs to the Panama station, literally a ton of programming! By December, the station had become a full-time operation.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7,

PCAC went off the air at 4:00 PM. They feared the transmitter might help the attacking Japanese aircraft vector into the canal from the sea. Thus ended military broadcasting in the Canal Zone until January, 1943, when the station went back on the air as part of a new, growing AFRS organization.(21)

### ALASKA BEGINNINGS

Like the "Voice of Freedom" station and PCAC, the first station in Alaska had a short life. However, its creation and operation followed a similar pattern – soldiers fulfilling soldiers' needs for entertainment and information in a remote location.

Responding to the increasing tensions with Japan, the War Department began to send troops to Alaska in early 1941. Units stationed in widely scattered locales found themselves with little to do in their spare time. Alaska had few commercial radio stations. None reached the remote military bases. In mid-March, 1941, however, two servicemen in Sitka began broadcasting to their fellow soldiers in an attempt to fill the void in news and entertainment. Using makeshift equipment and the call letters KRB, the men played records that they scrounged from other soldiers. They also recruited local talent to play live music and perform short skits. Ultimately, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) found out about the unauthorized station and ordered it shut down.(22)

### ARMY BROADCASTING BEGINNINGS

Although PCAC and KRB went on the air earlier, the honor of being the first Army broadcast operation to continue without interruption goes to another. In October, 1941, soldiers at Fort Greely, then located on Alaska's Kodiak Island, went on the air with Station KODK. On the remote island, the only access the troops had to radio were shortwave broadcasts from KGEI in San Francisco. Occasionally, they received AM programs from U.S. stations when atmospheric conditions permitted. According to *The Williwaws*, the Kodiak Naval Air Station newsletter, even these were subject to interference from "electric razors, adding machines, automobile ignition, and loose connections."(23)

At Fort Greely, as at Sitka, it was again the soldiers themselves who took it upon themselves to start a station for their buddies' news and entertainment. Captain William Adams, the base finance officer, was a former radio station employee in San Francisco. He placed a notice in the post newsletter announcing a meeting for anyone interested in starting a radio station. Twelve men responded. Adams divided them into an engineering committee to assemble a small transmitter, and a production committee to develop programming, find talent and put on trial shows. The first experimental "broadcast"

took place on October 28, 1941, a quarter-hour variety program consisting of a live band, singers, and a skit staged in the lounge of the officers' quarters. With Adams signaling his modulation cues through the window, a crystal mike picked up the show. A cable carried it next door to the mess hall. From there it aired over a loud speaker.(24) What a beginning!

The initial "broadcast" had an immediate impact on the civilian employees who were constructing military facilities on the island. Right away, they recognized the benefit of expanding the radio service. In three separate lotteries, the workers raised money. J.C. Henry, the contractor's general superintendent, used the funds to purchase a 15-watt transmitter, a turntable, microphones and other equipment. When the components arrived in early December, the "engineering committee" assembled them in the base's ordinance building. Test broadcasts for a few hours a day began with the program reaching all over the base and into the town of Kodiak.(25)

Even before the station officially went on the air, it became clear that a real studio would be needed to house the equipment. Henry and his builders again came through by volunteering their time to build a station on an empty piece of land near Lake Louise. By the end of December, they completed the studios, a control room, practice areas for performers, offices, and an auditorium seating 100 with standing room for 200 more. KODK, as the staff named the new station, began full-time operations on January 1, 1942, broadcasting from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM with enough power to reach throughout the island.(26)

Early KODK programs consisted primarily of recorded music and newscasts produced by a volunteer staff. Besides providing entertainment, KODK immediately began to serve as an informational outlet. The island commander, General Charles Corlett, used the radio station to offer an early radio commentary on the current status of the war.

"Every day finds us a little better prepared to beat off an attack," he said. "Ours is a unique establishment. Never before in the history of the United States has there been a combination naval and military base with a joint responsibility between the two services. Yet we work together in perfect harmony – pulling shoulder to shoulder to accomplish our common mission." Corlett also praised the construction workers' efforts in supporting KODK. The civilians working with the military symbolized the unified war effort.(27)

According to the base newspaper, the *Kodiak Bear*, the station was "into full cadence" by the middle of January. It was broadcasting "a full schedule of news, music variety programs, and talks by the command. Entertainment shows were arranged using talented directors,

musicians and comedians from various units stationed at the Post." In the first days of operation, it took only four hours to play through the station's entire record library. Soon, the selections improved as people brought in their own discs. Live programming included shows which each unit produced by gathering talent from the construction force and the local populace.

Regardless of the initial limitations imposed by the small record library and the somewhat limited abilities of the amateur performers, KODK met with immediate success. In a front page story, *The Williwaws* called the station "the best thing that has hit this area since the last boatload of nurses arrived. That seems to be the general idea around the camp as the nifty little outfit, operating at 1300-KW now, enters its fourth week of broadcasting."(28) Quite a review!

The quality of live performances received a temporary boost in March when comedian Joe E. Brown arrived in Kodiak during his one-man, 33-day tour of Alaskan military facilities. KODK was the only military radio station in operation during his travels and Brown appeared on the air several times during his stay. He also contributed to later programming after he got back to Hollywood by having his friends in the entertainment business send transcriptions of their radio broadcasts to KODK.(29)

In May, KODK did its first remote, covering the dedication of a new chapel by hooking an amplifier into a telephone line. After that, the station carried the Sunday chapel services every week. The station also provided a regular schedule of programs from each of the base's units. Music ranged from mountain to cowboy to big band style. The "Kodiak Press Club" performed a series of extravaganzas from murder mysteries to tales of thwarted love. Ultimately, the station survived and prospered through hard work and detailed planning. It produced balanced programs providing radio fare of interest to all segments of its audience.(30)

In November, KODK moved to temporary quarters in the Post library building while its facilities on Lake Louise underwent remodelling to improve broadcast quality. Workers constructed better soundproofing in the three studios and set the control room on four concrete blocks to assure stability for its equipment. On December 5, the station returned to its newly renovated building with the new call letters WVCX – and an official operating license from the FCC.(31)

Elsewhere, other stations began to appear on military bases throughout Alaska. At Sitka, in February, 1942, soldiers ignored the previous problem between the FCC and KRB and again started a station to provide entertainment and news. Private Charles Gilliam, a radio technician in civilian life, and Charles Green and Chet Iverson,

who were ham radio operators, had trained together at Camp McQuade, California. There they had decided to take radio parts and ham gear with them to their remote Alaskan post. A cooperative buddy in supply shipped the equipment to Sitka as "military equipment."

On arrival, Gilliam and Private Robert Nelson rigged a small transmitter and began broadcasting music directly from an old phonograph within a construction shack. They had no microphone to make announcements or to identify the source of the music, so the "broadcast" that reached only the nearby barracks, had no call letters, news or schedule.(32)

Encouraged by the response from the troops, the fledgling broadcasters painted the call letters GAB (standing for *Gil And Bob*) on the side of the shack and began expanding their operation. Donations began to come in to help improve the facility. On April 5, having acquired a "live" capability, the soldiers did their first remote, broadcasting the Easter Service from the Post Theater using the new call letters KRAY. As with KODK, they structured their early programming in a loose and informal way, to say the least. Soldiers assigned to regular military duties volunteered at the station during off hours – usually learning their jobs as they went along.(33)

As KRAY grew in size and popularity, the commander of the base, Colonel Walter Shoaff, approved the construction of a permanent facility containing three studios and four offices. The main studio seated 100 people for live broadcasts. In its new building, the station officially went on the air August 16th, with a ninety-minute live variety show that included several bands, solo performances, and a dramatic skit. Local citizens also contributed to the programming. Broadcasting from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, the station received a license from the FCC and the official call letters WVCX on November 19, 1942.(34)

Like KODK and the other stations that were springing up, KRAY initially had problems acquiring enough recorded material to sustain its operation. The transcriptions of commercial network shows, often arriving months after their stateside airing, helped to fill the stations' schedules even though they appeared on an irregular basis. A \$1,000 donation from Sitka residents and service clubs helped pay for a Lang-Worth transcription library for the station. A local citizen described the station as "one of the greatest things ever to happen to Sitka."(35)

The emergence and success of the Alaska stations proved that the need existed for regular radio programming to provide news and recreation for our U. S. military. Despite the obstacles, the soldiers in the field would find a way to put more of them on the air.

The haphazard, uncoordinated development of the

first Alaskan stations demonstrated one other fact. To improve morale and satisfy military requirements for reaching troops with command information and education would require a more organized broadcast operation.

True. But, no one despised the humble beginnings.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 2

- (1) Memorandum for General Pershing on Morale in the American Expeditionary Force, February 1, 1919.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Report to the Secretary of War on the Activities of Welfare Organizations Serving with the A.E.F., June 1, 1919, p.1.
- (4) Ibid, pp 1, 61.
- (5) Ibid, pp 7, 8.
- (6) Ibid, p 8.
- (7) Ibid, pp 8,9.
- (8) History of American Forces Philippines Network (AFPN), 1939 to December 31, 1968.
- (9) Frank Taylor, "He Bombs Tokyo Every Day," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 25, 1942, p. 10.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Evelyn Wells, Carlos P. Romulo, *Voice of Freedom*, p. 100,
- (14) Ibid, Carlos Romulo, *I Walked With Heros*, Avon Books, 1961, pp 161-164.
- (15) Romulo, *I Walked With Heros*, pp 164-165; Louis Morton, *The Fall Of The Philippines*, p 62.
- (16) Letter from MSgt Wayne Woods to Captain Damon Eckles, OIC, Public Affairs Office, Clark AFRS, the Philippines, October 26, 1953.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) The *Jungle Murder*, September 23, 1944.
- (21) Ibid.
- (22) Charles Gilliam interview with Ervin Green, September 7, 1982; E.M. Goddard, Speech on WVCX, Sitka, August 16, 1943.
- (23) *The Williwaws*, November 8, 1941.
- (24) *Kodiak Bear*, June 9, 1942.
- (25) Ibid; *Williwaws*, December 6, 1941; Interview with Pauline Magnusen, August 10, 1983.
- (26) *Kodiak Bear*, January 10, 1942; *Kodiak Bear*, June 9, 1942.
- (27) *Kodiak Bear*, January 17, 1942.
- (28) Ibid; Magnusen interview; *Williwaws*, January 24, 1942
- (29) *Kodiak Bear*, June 9, 1974.
- (30) Ibid; Interview with William Adams, September 14, 1982; Interview with Ole Johnson, August 10, 1983.
- (31) Ibid; *Kodiak Bear*, November 18, 1942; Vivian Lawhead Diary, December 5, 1942.
- (32) Interview with Charles Gilliam, August 2, 1983.
- (33) Ibid.
- (34) Ibid.
- (35) Military telegram, August 14, 1942.

## "COMMAND PERFORMANCES" AND OTHER GREAT SHOWS

During a visit to United States troops in Iceland in the spring of 1941, Colonel R.A. Bolling heard soldiers ask the Army to make sports broadcasts available. Through Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, Chief of the Army Ground Forces, they forwarded their request first to the Morale Service Division, and then to the Radio Division, Bureau of Public Relations in the War Department. Although the Radio Division had no such mandate included in its assigned activities, people there enthusiastically agreed to take on the task. Thus ushered in still another chapter in the extraordinary history of armed forces broadcasting.

Edward Kirby, a civilian broadcaster who'd come to Washington from Tennessee, was the one who tackled the job of developing the idea of "radio to troops." To put together the sports programs, he assembled a production staff that included Robert C. Coleson and Glenn Wheaton. Wheaton had worked for the 1939-40 San Francisco World's Fair Association. He and Louis Cowan, producer of the "Quiz Kids" program, volunteered their services as "dollar a year" men. As time would tell, that was an incredible bargain.

By late spring, the Radio Division was broadcasting to U.S. forces overseas by short wave. Right away, troops began to request musical selections in the same way that commercial disc jockeys received calls for particular records from listeners. So, Kirby's staff decided to develop its own disc jockey-like programs.

To customize the "dj" shows even further, Kirby and his staff got leading band leaders and their singers to cut speaking tracks along with a master of ceremonies who introduced their hit songs. Then they built that dialogue into the music and eventually constructed a half-hour transcription program that'd be broadcast overseas.

Although Glenn Wheaton wrote several prototype scripts, none were produced by December 7, 1941, the "Day of Infamy." To their credit, the Radio Division had expanded its broadcast schedule during the year. It included "News from Home," a weekly hometown news program, "Ringside Seat," a weekly sports roundup and in the Fall, "Football Rebroadcasts."

Following Pearl Harbor, the idea of a musical request show quickly became a reality, albeit in a different format. Wheaton told Coleson on December 8 that he thought the disc jockey idea should be discarded in favor of a live

show. With the United States in the war, Wheaton felt that the military could now get all the talent it wanted for a "Command Performance" broadcast. The staff agreed.

They encouraged the servicemen to "command the performers to appear," making them feel they had a real connection with the program. From this "command to appear" the program got its name, "Command Performance." Wheaton, generally credited for the coinage show's title, received the assignment to create a full production staff and bring the idea to fruition.

Lieutenant Rankin Roberts, a recent arrival to the Radio Bureau, undertook the task of setting up the shortwave broadcast of the program. He and Wheaton went to New York to arrange for the talent and air time. If possible, they'd recruit Vic Knight, the producer of the Fred Allen Show, to become the program producer of "Command Performance."

The impact of Pearl Harbor and the patriotic response of the nation made it easy. Glenn Wheaton assumed the general direction of the writers with the help of Knight, who readily accepted the job of producer for a dollar a year. The only cost to the War Department was for manufacturing transcriptions of the live shows, duplicating them, and shipping them to the short wave stations for broadcast. Wheaton obtained all the talent, additional writers, studio facilities, and air time at no cost!

Under Wheaton's leadership, "Command Performances" took less than three months to get on the air. The first program broadcast on March 1, 1942, in the New York CBS radio theater. The caliber of the show's cast was outstanding, setting the standard for future programs:

Harry Von Zell served as the announcer, Eddie Cantor acted as the master of ceremonies, and the Corky Fairchild Orchestra provided the music. (One of the writers of Eddie Cantor's comedy material, Bob Welch, became the producer of "Command Performance" as an Army corporal after the program moved to Los Angeles.) Bert Gordon added a comic touch as the "Mad Russian" and the Western Union boys sang a birthday telegram. Troops in Iceland requested a sports segment, so the programmers included a recording of the January 9<sup>th</sup> Joe Lewis-Buddy Bear title fight on the finished transcription.

Engineers made two transcriptions and then duplicated the discs. From the beginning, "Command Performance" was broadcast from transcriptions because of the time zone difference in the locations of the American forces. To protect transcriptions against human error, engineers borrowed the technical procedure from the phonograph recording industry. This became standard operating practice, on occasion preventing an irreplaceable loss of a completed program.

On March 8th, the show was broadcast on eleven

American shortwave stations to troops overseas. Starting with the original eleven stations, Lieutenant Roberts gradually expanded the network. By May 29, 1942, KGEI in San Francisco was beaming the show to the Pacific.

#### "COMMAND PERFORMANCES" MOVES WEST

Although New York produced the first six "Command Performances," it quickly became obvious that the show should move to the West Coast. First, the troops' overwhelmingly requested more programming starring the Hollywood personalities. Second, the program was quickly exhausting the talent then available in New York. Third, both Wheaton and Knight had their permanent homes in Los Angeles.

Once in the West, Robert Coleson borrowed office space from CBS in their Hollywood building at Sunset and Gower. He also arranged for the use of the network's large audience studio for the recording sessions. For talent, Wheaton and Knight began negotiations with George Rosenberg, the radio director of the Hollywood Victory Committee.

The first West Coast transcription of "Command Performance" occurred on April 12, 1942. It featured Paul Douglas as the announcer, Gene Tierney as the master of ceremonies, Betty Hutton, Gary Cooper, the Andrews Sisters, Ray Noble and his Orchestra, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Ginny Simms, and Bob Burns. Although Rosenberg had not realized that "Command Performance" was to be produced on a regular basis, his commitment increased as the program continued. Ultimately, every notable Hollywood personality appeared on the show, often frequently.

The original production policies for the show, which Edward Kirby had established in New York, remained in effect as long as the Radio Bureau produced the program in Hollywood. The entertainment industry donated the talent, studio facilities, and technical equipment and the War Department paid for the production, just like it'd done in New York. The NBC Recording Division in Hollywood handled the technical processing. The increased distribution network ultimately required the use of vinylite pressings.

During the period that the Radio Bureau produced "Command Performance," Wheaton remained the chief writer. However, shortly after the program moved to Hollywood, Kirby replaced Vic Knight with Maury Holland due to unreasonable demands by Knight and the "increasing sense of his own importance." On one occasion, Knight had demanded the appearance of a singer on "Command Performance" even though she'd already committed to appear at a war bond rally in Boston. Knight had refused to accept Judy Garland as a

replacement, requiring Coleson's intercession.

Later, Cal Kuhl, the top producer of the Hollywood office of J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency, became the third and final producer of "Command Performance" under the Radio Division.

Besides its original purpose of providing entertainment to the troops overseas, "Command Performance" became a vehicle for the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations. So, at the request of the War Department and the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), Glenn Wheaton's crew produced Show Number 15 in Cleveland, Ohio, on May 13. He later recalled, the program "was done under well nigh impossible conditions, against our wishes and judgment. We've always thought poorly of that particular show, although apparently it served its purpose of entertaining the NAB, which, of course, was not our primary purpose."

The Radio Division itself, however, was not adverse to using "Command Performance" for its own ends. Wheaton recalls that on August 30, the Division produced the show at the National Theater in Washington, D.C. In doing so, he hoped it would obtain better cooperation, funds, and prestige from the War Department. Stars from one of the Victory Caravans and other entertainers flew in from Hollywood and performed. Kay Kyser flew in his entire orchestra by charter plane to provide the music. Top-ranking government and military officials made up the audience.

The show, which Kirby called "the Big G.I. Broadcast of 1942," saw performances by such notables as Bing Crosby, Larry Adler, Bert Wheeler, Paul Douglas, Ginny Simms, Jimmy Cagney, Hedy Lamarr, Abbott and Costello, and Dinah Shore. It spanned seventy-five minutes of terrific entertainment, giving the production staff enough material for programs 30 and 31 in the series and enough left over to create program 34 with some additional segments from earlier broadcasts.

#### THE STARS COME OUT: HOPE, CROSBY, BENNY AND MORE

In the pursuit of further recognition, the Bureau of Public Relations planned a special Christmas show that was broadcast domestically over commercial networks and independent stations, shortwaved overseas to the troops, and rebroadcast by the BBC on Christmas Day. The program included Bob Hope as emcee, the Andrews Sisters, Red Skelton, Spike Jones and his Orchestra, Bing Crosby, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Dinah Shore, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, and the 20th Century Fox Orchestra.

Editors transcribed portions of the show in New York and added material recorded in Hollywood. According to Wheaton, this was the only "Command Performance"

the Radio Division produced and released for broadcast in the United States.(1)

On a parallel track, other events within the Army were also shaping the beginning of AFRS and the direction of programs such as "command Performance."

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 3

(1) This chapter is largely based on an unpublished research paper by Theodore S. DeLay Jr., "An Historical Study of the Radio Series, 'Command Performance,'" written in June 1950. Additional information is presented from an interview with Jack Harris on October 15, 1982.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE JOINT COMMITTEE

On a parallel track, other events were also shaping the beginning of AFRS.

At the close of World War I, the War Department established a Morale Branch within the General Staff. Its mission: to coordinate the work of the civilian welfare agencies and others that influenced the morale of the Army. One was an education program financed initially by the YMCA, which provided classes for troops awaiting shipment home after the war. The War Department later transferred the YMCA officers into an organization known as the Army Education Corps. The Corps then set up an Education and Recreation program on military bases in the United States.

The Morale Branch began experimental studies and initial work that might have had important implications in the peacetime Armed Services. Unfortunately, the drastic curtailment of appropriations during the peacetime of the 1920's and 1930's limited any significant results. So, local commanders retained the primary responsibility for maintaining on-base troop morale.

Perhaps the only important contribution of the Morale Branch came from its Chief, Brigadier General E.L. Munson, who wrote a book entitled *Management of Men*. Despite the work's inadequate and insufficient evidence of social research, Munson was years ahead of his time in defining the impact of leadership and personnel management on troop morale. Yet, his ideas of the foundation of military morale fell into obscurity by 1939.

When Army Mobilization Regulation (MR) 1-10 dated October 21, 1939, appeared, it defined morale largely in terms of physical welfare, food, leaves, discipline, and recreation. It included directives intended "to set forth in detail those factors that have a decided influence on morale, to show how each of these factors should be dealt with in order to indicate the most suitable and practicable organization for the control and supervision of morale factors." (1)

The provisions of the MR 1-10 went into effect in July, 1940, establishing a Morale Division in the Adjutant General's Office. Its major sections included Army Motion Picture Service, Recreation and Welfare, War Department Exhibits, Decorations, and Morale Publicity. Although the title of "Morale Publicity Section" contained the implication of troop information, it served primarily as a minor public relations office for the War Department. It had no written responsibility nor

intentions of expanding into either an education program or a program of indoctrination or orientation.

The Morale Division did, however, plan and begin the operations of a network of recreation facilities on each military installation in the United States and abroad.

The 1939 Mobilization Regulations also directed that the Secretary of War appoint a committee of civilian and military officials who were experts in welfare and community service activities. The committee's purpose was to advise the Secretary on the relationship between the activities of the Armed Services and those provided by other governmental and private agencies. Initiated in January, 1941, as an Army committee, it expanded in February to include Navy and Marine representatives with the title "Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation."

Secretary of War Henry Stimson selected Fredrick Osborn, a friend of President Franklin Roosevelt and Chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation, to head the committee. Osborn had originally come to Washington in August, 1940, to work as a "dollar a year man" in the U.S. Budget Office. President Roosevelt later appointed him the Chairman of the Selective Service Committee before Stimson tapped him to lead the work on troop welfare.

During the 1930's, Osborn devoted a large part of his time to studies in the social sciences besides his business interests. On occasion, he discussed the issues raised in his War Department Reports with Raymond Fosdick, the Department's morale expert. After his appointment, he convinced Fosdick to join the Joint Committee. Fosdick's addition to the committee provided a direct link with the studies of morale problems the Army had experienced after World War I.

Once the United States entered the war, the influence of these committee members was a key ingredient in the agency's ability to shape the morale activities of the Armed Forces. Besides Osborn and Fosdick, the committee initially included Clarence Dyhestra, then Director of the Selective Service; Robert Sherwood, the playwright and later Overseas Director for the Office of War Information; Charles Taft, son of the former President and later Director of the Office of Community War Services; Wayne Coy, Assistant Administrator of the Federal Security Agency; and Arthur Page, Vice President of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and an authority on public relations.

Each of these men had a long-standing commitment to public service and a deep interest in the progress of the Army and Navy provisions for recreation and entertainment.

According to Francis Keppel, a 23-year-old freshman Dean at Harvard who came to Washington as the committee's secretary, the members all hoped that a

soldier's experience would provide mental as well as physical and moral benefits. To this end, the committee spent a considerable amount of time studying the problem and the current research on education and leadership. They received support from educators, the press and social science research groups, and from Army Secretary Stinson and Chief of Staff George C. Marshall.(2)

### THE USO

Ultimately, the committee concluded that the welfare of troops outside of army camps should be in the hands of a single group called the United Service Organization (USO). It was to be formed by the four private agencies who had worked in this area during World War I. In response to a request from the President, the committee prepared a formal recommendation from the Army and Navy on how to establish the new agency. Osborn, accompanied by General Marshall, hand carried the proposal to the White House. President Roosevelt read the report out loud to the assembled group. When he came to the part describing how the USO would be in charge of recreation and troop welfare outside military bases, Paul McNutt, then head of Health, Education, and Welfare, interrupted. "We've changed that," he said. "We've set up an organization in my department to do that."(3)

A heated discussion followed. Osborn stuck to the original recommendations that the USO should remain in private hands. So, the President became obviously pained at the noisy argument. As Osborn later recalled, Roosevelt suddenly relaxed and began to smile. He leaned forward and placed his hand on McNutt's shoulder. "Paul," he said, "if you do this you'll have a large staff and when the war is over you will have to fire them all. And, that would break your heart. I wouldn't have that happen to you for anything. We'll have the USO do it."(4)

Meanwhile, in February, 1941, seven months after the establishment of the AG Morale Division, General Marshall ordered the major commands to send their morale officers to Washington for a conference on troop morale issues. In preparing for the meeting, Marshall talked with Fosdick about the problems of World War I and consulted with General Munson about his book *Management of Men*.

By the time the conference convened on February 25th, Marshall had formulated his own ideas on an Army education and information program. He was aware of the necessity to keep soldiers interested in the work and the problems of restlessness in a peacetime Army still ill-equipped to fight.

However, the caliber of the officers that came to the

conference didn't help Marshall find any solutions to these problems. Over half the officers had received their assignment within two days of their departure for Washington. Few of them had any professional training or experience in personnel management, welfare work, or recreation let alone the area of informing and educating troops. Many of them had no idea what their job involved and most had received kidding from their fellow officers about their assignment.(5)

The preparation for the conference and the sessions themselves made it clear that the War Department's existing machinery was not adequate to "enable the Chief of the Morale Division to know the state of morale of the Army." So, on March 14, 1941, the Army created the Morale Branch directly under the supervision of the Chief of Staff. The new agency received the mission of "the operation in the War Department of matters regarding recreation and welfare and all other morale matters not specifically charged to other War Department agencies. The chief of the Morale Branch will develop methods and procedures that will enable him at all times to know the state of morale of the Army," it said. "In accomplishing these missions he will conform to normal channels of command."(6)

General Marshall named Brigadier General James Ulio as Chief of the new Army Morale Branch collateral to his other duties as Assistant to the Adjutant General. The branch had four major divisions: Welfare and Recreation, Planning and Research, Public Relations, and Services.

Included in Public Relations was the responsibility for camp newspapers and camp radio reception. The initial organization contained foundations for future information and education activities. The initial activities involved the expansion of recreation facilities in the camps and the negotiations which formalized the creation of the USO. By then, Frederick Osborn's Joint Committee had moved into the War Department and he had a desk next to General Ulio.(7)

When General Ulio became ill in August, 1941, and had to leave the Morale Branch, General Marshall recommended commissioning Osborn as a Brigadier General and appointing him as Chief of the agency. There was much "soul-searching." Could he handle the job of a General without even "knowing how to salute?" With the "feeling that my civilian qualities would always be uppermost," Osborn took the assignment. His was one of the first War Department appointments of a civilian to rank of General Officer. As one can imagine, it created a considerable amount of comment in the press and within the Army itself.(8)

To Army officers, morale was a word of many meanings. It was all too often confused either with morals or drill field precision, but in either case, the responsibility

for morale rested on the commander in the field, not on a staff section in Washington. As a "civilian general," Osborn faced his task with a partly developed staff, a rather suspicious army, and, except for Munson's *Management of Men* and Fosdick's reports, little basic doctrine as a guide. Still, there was much to do.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor increased the problems - and the demands for solutions - beyond anything anticipated before December 7. Reflecting this, the Morale Branch changed its name to Special Services on January 15, 1942. It now included recreation responsibilities with those of information and education.

By June, 1942, the branch split into a Special Services Division in charge of recreation and welfare activities and an Information and Education Division. Osborn took over the I and E operation. He and General Marshall both believed that providing information and education to the troops was crucial to the war effort. Troops had to understand why they had to fight. Marshall recognized that the medium of film could be an excellent way to do that, so he arranged to have Academy Award-winning film director Frank Capra immediately transferred from the Signal Corps. He had commissioned him in February, into Brigadier General Osborn's Morale Branch.(9)

After meeting with Osborn in his office, Capra reported to Colonel E.L. Munson Jr., who was the head of the Information Services section. It handled news, radio, pamphlets and film. After introducing Capra to the organization, Munson asked him if he knew a man named Tom Lewis.

#### TOM LEWIS

Yes, Capra knew Lewis both as the husband of actress Loretta Young and as Vice President in charge of radio production at Young and Rubicam, one of the country's major advertising agencies. Munson responded, "That's the man. We think he's the best candidate to head our radio section." Still recovering from his sudden transfer from the Signal Corps to Special Services, Capra threatened to tell Lewis to stay out of uniform to avoid becoming "another 'body' to be kicked around by some jerk superior."(10)

In an effort to calm Capra, Munson explained, "Frank, you know as well as we do that 'propaganda' is a dirty word to the American public. Congress has always been mistrustful of any 'managed' news, any so-called propaganda being fed to the captive audiences of millions of troops in uniform." The Army, on the other hand, believed that soldiers wanted to know why they were in uniform. "To tell them why," Munson said, the service was "going all out with modern communications media - newsprint, radio, and film." Munson explained that to ensure bipartisan support for the operation, Frederick

Osborn, a Republican, was heading Special Services. His aide then interrupted to add that Munson, a West Pointer, was in direct charge of Army information to make the operation "acceptable to mossback Army diehards."(11)

Once he understood his role, Capra asked Munson where Lewis fit in. Munson explained. "We're thinking of him for a job that would have scared off Hercules. We want a Superman who'll get up and run a worldwide radio service that'll be bigger than all our commercial radio companies put together. We want an airway hookup between the homefront and every military unit as small as a squad, in any part of the globe -- from pole to pole, from continent to continent, sea to sea. We want to send the news from home -- entertainment, shows with stars, comedians, girls, football games, baseball, Kentucky Derbies. We want to bring America's love to our sons and daughters, provide the forgetfulness for the wounded, the homesick and the despairing. We want them to know that we care!"(12)

Lewis was recommended for the job. Munson added, "setting up a globe-encompassing armed forces radio service is one of the toughest jobs ever offered to any one man. Like Columbus, he'll have to sail into unknown seas. Some very big and very smart men have insisted that Tom Lewis is our man. They say he's a genius in getting things done."

Munson had studied Lewis inside and out and did concur that he "is a genius." Being a genius was fine, but in such a job a person would also have to be "lucky." Munson asked Capra whether he thought Lewis was "lucky."

The director responded, "I don't know about Tom Lewis being lucky, but I know damn well that you, the Army, and the country will be lucky. You've got your man, fellows -- a man who asks God for help, and gets it."(13)

Meanwhile, Lewis had been exploring the possibilities of getting a commission in the Army or Navy. He had favored the Navy as a result of having visited the *USS Arizona* that summer. In the midst of his efforts to enlist, he received a request from the joint Army and Navy Committee. Now chaired by Walter Page, it asked for a plan for a global communications operation. Page wanted an information, orientation and entertainment radio organization for the U.S. troops, wherever they were in combat. Major Arthur Farlow, who delivered the request, had been the San Francisco representative of J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency before joining the Army. He told Lewis that the Joint Committee was influenced by the range of his experience in broadcasting including local radio stations in Schenectady and Cleveland, his familiarity with the motion picture

industry and its leaders, and his work in audience research techniques.(14)

Major Farlow explained that the Army wanted Lewis to resign from his position at Young and Rubicam, enlist, and take on the operation. The Army promised him a commission to the rank of Major. Lewis accepted at once. Later, he acknowledged, "I wasn't quite certain at the moment how high or low in the order of things the rank of Major belonged, but it all sounded fine to me, the answer to prayer. I knew I could do it, it was so obviously the answer I had been seeking."(15)

Lewis resigned from Y & R and his position with Audience Research, Inc., the George Gallup subsidiary of the ad agency. Immediately, he began to work on the master plan for the Joint Committee. Lewis charted on world maps the places where the Armed Forces would likely to be fighting in the coming years. He planned the necessary coverage and made rough estimates of the huge quantities of equipment that they'd need – including long and shortwave transmitters and thousands of receivers. To handle the vast distances (and time zones) involved, Lewis determined that the agency would have to transmit its programs twenty-four hours a day.(16)

Studying the directives under which his organization would operate, Lewis determined what had to be created from scratch and what could be secured and adapted from material already being broadcast by the major networks. The Army would have to write and produce its own "education" and orientation programs. "Information" material could be retrieved from the same sources as that of the general public. For "entertainment" programs, Lewis' organization could combine radio networks' most popular programs with specially created troop-oriented material.(17)

Lewis needed to obtain priorities – particularly in the civilian recording industry – in order to staff the organization and to acquire equipment. Like other non-combat operations, he found himself in "backbreaking, soul-searching" competition for limited assets. Both the military and civilian officials with whom he worked thought all personnel and resources should be directed to the military combat effort.(18)

As soon as he received his commission on May 26, 1942, Tom Lewis went to Washington with his plans that the Joint Committee and his superiors accepted. Excited, he was anxious to implement them as quickly as possible.

As headquarters for the production operation, Lewis selected buildings first in the Taft Building on Hollywood and Vine. Later, they moved onto the old Twentieth Century Fox lot on Western Avenue in Hollywood – the same location Capra had chosen for his offices. Faced with slow movement by the War Department and Congressional budget committees to approve the move,

Lewis turned to Capra for advice.

"Just move into them anyway," Capra told him. "Don't ask questions. You have two choices if you want to accomplish the things we've been commissioned to do in this Army: take what you need and do what you must to get the job done – or go crazy! There's no resigning or backing out in the Army, and who needs to go nuttier than we are? We were crazy to try to do this in the first place!"(19)

Lewis accepted the advice. He set up on the Fox lot and began putting his staff together, recruiting close friends from his radio work. These included an incredible team of professionals. True Boardman joined the staff on July 19, 1942, coming directly from the movie set of *The Arabian Nights* at Universal Studios. He would serve as Lewis' Executive Officer throughout the conflict. He and associate Austin "Pete" Peterson received commissions. Charles Vanda and Jerry Lawrence, CBS execs, entered the Army as enlisted men. Robert Lee was another talented Lewis associate from Young & Rubicam. He and Lawrence had formed a writing partnership in January, 1942, which endured for more than forty years. Together, they'd produced such wonderful plays as "Inherit The Wind," "Auntie Mame" and "First Tuesday In October."

Another contemporary, Al Scalpone, was exempt from active service, but came into the armed forces as a civilian employee at a fraction of his previous salary. When word got out, Tom Lewis received letters and phone calls from the best and most successful writers, producers, and technicians in the radio industry. They all wanted to get in on the ground floor.(20)

Not all the volunteers were exactly noble – some of the applications were expecting draft notices any day. Some had already received orders for their draft examinations. Others were already in the service, but not in positions in which their creativity could be put to good use. Still others got in touch simply because they felt the need to help. Excepting those who were simply looking for soft berths, Lewis managed to get the key people into AFRS to build up his production staff.

At the same time, he established goals for the organization and procedures for accomplishing them. As a result, it was to take several months before AFRS began its own production of programs. During this time, "Command Performance" and the radio stations at Kodiak and Sitka continued to provide the sole military broadcasting for the troops.

The Radio Section had found their man. Tom Lewis would become the father of armed forces radio, then radio and television. Until his death a half-century later, Tom Lewis continued as the inspirational leader of AFRTS

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 4

- (1)Mobilization Regulations 1-10, October 21, 1939.
- (2)Interview with Francis Keppel, March 6, 1984; Fredrick Osborn, *Voyage To A New World*, pp. 88-91; Francis Keppel, *Study of Information and Education Activities in World War II*, April 6, 1946, hereafter cited as Keppel, *Study*, pp 9-13.
- (3)Osborn, pp 91-92.
- (4)Ibid, p 92.
- (5)Keppel, *Study*, p 14; Interview with Jack Pulwers, March 25, 1984.
- (6)Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Subject: *Creation of a separate branch for military morale*, March 3, 1941.
- (7)Osborn, *Voyage To A New World*, p 92; Keppel, *Study*, pp 16-18.
- (8)Osborn, p 92; Keppel, p 18.
- (9)Frank Capra, *The Name Above The Title*, pp 351-354.
- (10)Ibid, p 353.
- (11)Ibid.
- (12)Frank Capra, "Introduction" to Tom Lewis's unpublished autobiography, p vii, cited hereafter as *Lewis*.
- (13)Ibid, pp vii - viii.
- (14)Ibid, pp 283-284.
- (15)Ibid, p 284.
- (16)Ibid, p 285.
- (17)Ibid.
- (18)Ibid, pp 285-286.
- (19)Ibid, pp 288-289.
- (20)Ibid, p 291.

## THE EARLY DAYS OF ARMED FORCES RADIO

The directive that established Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) on May 26, 1942, commanded Tom Lewis to "provide education, information and orientation for our Armed Forces overseas by means of entertainment and special events broadcasts."

To accomplish this, the AFRS was to maintain a weekly schedule of transcribed radio programs that would be distributed to the various overseas outlets. In a report on May 26, 1942, to the radio sub-committee of the Joint Army and Navy Committee, Tom Lewis interpreted the order. "It is," he said, "a formal way of saying that the Armed Forces Radio Service is directed to assist in supplying the American soldier with the emotional and intellectual impetus he needs, in addition to his technical knowledge and training, to make him a better fighting man, and to strive to maintain in him the mental attitudes of a free American."<sup>(1)</sup>

Lewis acknowledged he had no illusions about his job. "We're not foolhardy enough to think that we can change the entire mental attitude of a soldier by the appropriate use of a loudspeaker. Neither radio nor any other media can completely reconcile a boy from Grand Rapids to a military life in Persia. But we can help in his adjustment, for frequently the dividing line's not too definite between the soldier who merely submits to his job and to the one who'll apply himself whole-heartedly to the achievement of an end."<sup>(2)</sup>

Lewis had defined his philosophy, found a location for his operation, and begun putting a staff together. He then turned to his two initial objectives. First was to conduct a scientific survey of the listening habits and attitudes of the troops. Second was to consolidate all military broadcasting operations under one command.

It took him almost 16 months of continuous effort to gain control of radio operations such as "Command Performance" from other agencies. The survey proved much less of a problem. The Research Branch of the Special Services Division conducted the study for Lewis during July and August and produced a report dated September 3, 1942.

The survey questioned 3,286 enlisted men of the Army ground forces in fifteen camps from coast to coast. The researchers found that a little more than half of the troops listened to the radio at some time on a typical work day. Peak listening periods were from 6:15 to 7:00 AM, at

midday, and in the evening from 7:00 to 8:30. Most of the men listened to the radio in their barracks. In order of popularity, the favorite types of programs were dance music, news, comedy, sports, variety, swing music, radio plays, old familiar music, and quiz programs. The least liked programs were serial dramas, classical music, and hillbilly and western music. Favorite specific programs, mentioned by more than 20 percent of the men, were "The Hit Parade," Kay Kyser, and Bob Hope.

While Lewis was in Washington receiving his commission, Robert Sherwood, the noted playwright and then a special assistant to President Roosevelt, approached him. He suggested that he transfer to the office of General William Donovan. The President had appointed Donovan as the Coordinator of Information (COI), which was the forerunner of the Office of War Information and the United States Information Agency. Sherwood worried that the Army's restrictive bureaucracy would differ with Lewis' own freewheeling style. That would keep him from fulfilling General Osborn's mandate. The COI had begun to expand shortwave broadcasting facilities in August, 1941 and Sherwood assured Lewis that he "could operate freely there."<sup>(3)</sup>

Lewis declined the offer, believing that he "should do the job within the military as I'd been commissioned to do." Moreover, Donovan's organization might use radio for its own purposes. Lewis didn't want to take the chance that the troops would "be propagandized" by COI programming. Instead, he'd rely on an organization that reached the men with credibility. Despite the turn-down, Sherwood promised to help Lewis in any way possible. He invited Lewis to take a trip to Alaska to see for himself the soldiers' needs for information, education and recreation in the field.<sup>(4)</sup>

Accepting the opportunity as a chance to gain first-hand knowledge of the status in the field, Lewis accompanied Murray Brophy, Chief of the COI Overseas Facilities Bureau, to Alaska. For Lewis, the trip provided a clear-cut picture of the audience he'd be reaching and a good idea of what to provide in the way of programming.

Lewis later recalled how his driver complained about not knowing why the military had sent him to Alaska. "I don't know what's happening, he'd say. "All I do is drive VIP's back and forth on this road. I don't know of anything else."

To Lewis, the confused driver became his image of the soldier who'd win the war. The chance meeting influenced Lewis' perceptions of Armed Forces Radio as an "operation by the enlisted man, mostly, for the enlisted man." If the American fighting forces were going to be successful, Lewis believed they would have to understand for what they were fighting. Radio could help provide that information.<sup>(5)</sup>

On the trip, Lewis learned of the existence of the radio stations at Kodiak and Sitka. He also learned that the Nome Civilian Defense Commission had started broadcasting by a "carrier current" type of transmission that used existing power lines, telephone lines, pipes, etc., as conductors for broadcasting waves. The station covered limited areas such as camps, quartermaster's depots, etc., and was in essence a closed-circuit radio system.

From studying these small, local, self-help operations, Lewis acquired the model for future AFRS stations. The Alaska trip also helped him realize and appreciate the scope of the work to be done. Shortwave transmission from the United States wouldn't reach the millions of troops worldwide.

As the first step in solving the problem, Lewis entered into an informal arrangement with Brophey. AFRS didn't have a formal budget yet, but Brophey and the COI did.

At Lewis' request, Brophey agreed to transfer some radio transmitters and operating personnel to expand coverage to military areas in Alaska and the Aleutians. He also committed the COI to provide radio coverage for American troops in the United Kingdom.

In support of the operation, which was to become the Armed Forces Network (AFN), the COI would supply Tom Lewis low-powered transmitters and personnel. He'd also arrange for connecting landlines. In return, once AFRS had become fully operational, Lewis agreed to take over the facilities in Great Britain with his own people. According to Brophey, the official basis for the COI commitment came from President Roosevelt himself, declaring that "when they declared peace, he wanted his voice heard by all the people around the world".(6)

The Lewis-Brophey arrangement provided service to American forces in both Alaska and Great Britain. More important, it became the reference point for all AFRS expansion during the war. In mid-June, however, AFRS still didn't have a budget and was facing a challenge to its directive from the Army's Radio Branch, Bureau of Public Relations. Even worse, the AFRS table of organization called for only three officers and not a single radio production or broadcast facility.(7)

With the help of General Munson's aide, Colonel Jack Stanley, Lewis solved the immediate budget problems. Although Stanley could not expedite approval of the budget for AFRS, he explained that a fund existed in the Army earmarked for "the welfare of the enlisted man."

Lewis exclaimed that his project existed for just that purpose. Stanley replied, "I know how you can borrow \$50,000 from that fund if you sign yourself personally responsible for it. When your budget is approved, you can pay it back. It'd even expedite getting your budget approved."(8)

Lewis asked, "what happens if my budget is not

approved?" Shrugging, Stanley observed, "Hell, Tom, that's like saying 'Are we going to win the war?' If we don't, what good is money anyway? You'll be out \$50,000 — and your country."

Lewis agreed with Stanley's logic, took on the personal responsibility and used the money to move into his Hollywood headquarters.

#### LEWIS GOES TO WASHINGTON

Lewis, accompanied by his wife, Loretta Young, and his staff went to Washington in July, 1942. There he and his staff met with Army officials to discuss the structure and procedures of AFRS and to deal with the challenge of the Bureau of Public Relations.

In order to provide the troops "a little bit of home," Lewis and his group wanted to use discs as the heart of their effort to deliver both entertainment and information. This was in contrast to the Bureau that used the less-than-dependable shortwave for all their transmissions. AFRS would use shortwave only as a means to deliver timely material such as news, sports, and special features.(9)

From the Washington meetings, which included a session with General Osborn on August 4, the AFRS staff returned to California with a "Memorandum of Projected Initial Program Schedule." The radio program activity would parallel the efforts of the motion pictures and publications of the Special Service Division. Its activity would come from two major sources. First, they would select from commercial network broadcasts "the material most adaptable for our purposes." Second, they'd use organization-produced material "to fill specific needs in the language and the psychology of the Army."(10)

The memorandum recognized that "commercial broadcasting can exist only in its relation to the normal civilian mode of life and is directed to the entire public." Such broadcasting, it said, "cannot [therefore] wholly fulfill the needs of the men or soldier-interest in respect to type of program."

As a result, within the continental United States, AFRS accepted the "responsibility of producing daily a volume of information and recreational programs for the soldiers' exclusive use." AFRS proposed to deliver these programs to camps in the United States and larger bases abroad by carrier radio. As troops began to move overseas, AFRS would supply a greater volume of material, using shortwave broadcasts where possible. Where locations precluded receiving these broadcasts, the material would be delivered by phonograph records.

The memorandum also recognized that seasonal and climatic phenomena would restrict the troops' outdoor free time. It stated such a condition "logically leads to an increase in the amount and variety of program material to fill these hours which otherwise might become a psycho-

logical problem." Such BPR programs as "Command Performance," "The News From Home," and "Grandstand Seat" had been doing, "a consistently good job, but they represent[ed] only the beginning of the work to be done."

The memo's writers considered the expenses involved in such an extensive program. While "Command Performance" had so far been able to have artists appear without cost, it couldn't "be expected to provide an unlimited amount of free service." Fortunately, they were wrong. Throughout the war, radio and film stars donated their time regularly and did so without cost to the government. Their contribution to the war effort relieved AFRS of the need to negotiate for services. Working through several leading Hollywood agents, the producers of the individual programs simply requested particular entertainers to fulfill requests from the troops or requirements of scripts.

"After all," the memorandum maintained, "every program that's expressly designed for and directed to the soldiers overseas, gives to those men a stronger tie with home and a deeper realization that they're not the 'forgotten' men of 1942." Stars were a necessary part of every program.

In presenting its schedule of original program material, the memorandum stressed, "The key-note of the entire operation of the Radio Section of the Special Services Division must be flexibility. The schedule of programs outlined herewith will be constantly subject to change and improvement. Continuing correlation with the whole shortwave picture will cause some deviation. As our research determines which programs are most effective, we may wish to elaborate on these shows, and later the formats of others."

The outline included new programs produced by Special Services "especially for the entertainment and information of troops overseas." Commercial network broadcasts and backlog programs could be used by local stations for their own broadcasts. Of all the specially-created programs, the best was "Mail Call," which drew its inspiration from "Command Performance." According to the writers, the Backlog Program Reserve (BPR) program "has proved how effective well-produced shortwave radio programs can be in building morale of troops overseas. Its record indicates that more programs should and must be built along these lines."

The other proposed programs included "Music For Sunday," which featured religious music. Another, "Yanks On The March," contained "dramatized news of the war, slanted directly for soldiers abroad, and presented in the authentic format of the present 'March of Time.'" There sports, of course, news from the homefront and symphonies. The memorandum pro-

posed to dub into current network shows "messages directed especially to information of particular interest to overseas soldiers. These tie-ins will give the shows a soldier-slant, which they lack in their original broadcast form." The Back Log Program Reserve would act as a reservoir of material with which stations could fill out their broadcast schedule.

Once in operation, AFRS programming didn't follow the Projected Program Schedule in all respects. Actual programming included both military-produced programs and network staples. Although only a few of the proposed in-house programs were to see the light of day, "Mail Call," the first AFRS program, survived throughout the war and beyond.

As a matter of policy and in agreement with the unions, the service removed all commercials from the programs that it sent overseas. To ensure better distribution and quality than could be achieved by shortwave, it distributed them on discs. As the technicians became more efficient in recording programs and as distribution lines became firmly established, they included more and more network and local programs in the packages sent to the troops. Instead of a Back Log Reserve, they included music-only discs in the package for use on locally-originated programs.

Lewis continued to work in Washington to wrest control of military broadcast operations from the Bureau of Public Relations and other war Department agencies. Soon after he returned from Alaska, the USO agreed to transfer carrier current stations that it had been operating to AFRS.

In June, President Roosevelt issued an executive order transferring the responsibilities of the COI to a new agency, the Office of War Information (OWI). General William Donovan, the former Coordinator of Information (COI), regained and built up a new unit, the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. President Roosevelt appointed Elmer Davis to head the new OWI.(12)

Davis manifested no interest in relinquishing his control of the radio operations, maintaining, "The broadcasts to the Armed Forces were started by one of OWI's predecessor organizations... and they were going strong when I came in... It was started because nobody else was doing the job." Consequently, Lewis found himself in "extensive and often heated negotiations" that finally involved Dr. Milton Eisenhower, General Osborn, and certain members of Congress.

In the end, Davis ordered that the OWI would cease production of troop shows on September 1, 1943, and made OWI shortwave equipment available to AFRS. During the periods of its use by AFRS, the service excluded OWI personnel, with military guards placed on all

doors. To Lewis, this was "a big step that enabled us to develop our 24-hour globe-girdling system of shortwave operations free of propaganda and totally operated by soldiers for the welfare of soldiers. Now the average GI could hear another GI giving out the same news heard by his family at home. He could depend upon its veracity. That, I believed, was not only morally correct, it was good ol' American common sense."(13)

Lewis had won. The Bureau of Public Relations accepted the inevitable and turned over control of "Command Performance" to AFRS on December 15, 1942. By that date, AFRS was working out of the Fox Studio, producing its programs and developing its methods of distribution.

As United States troops started landing on foreign territory, more stations were beginning to go on the air.

AFRS was off and running.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 5

- (1)Armed Forces Radio Service, "Progress Report," May 26, 1942 – December 1, 1945, p 4, Cited hereafter as "Progress Report".
- (2)*Ibid.*
- (3)Lewis, Autobiography; Lewis interview, September 15, 1982.
- (4)*Ibid.*
- (5)*Ibid.*
- (6)Lewis, Autobiography; "Progress Report" pp 13-14.
- (7)"Progress Report," p. 13.
- (8)Lewis, Autobiography.
- (9)Interview with True Boardman, September 8, 1982; interview with Jerry Lawrence, September 30, 1982; interview with Bob Lee, September 30, 1982.
- (10)"Memorandum of Projected Initial Program Schedule," N.D./August 1942.
- (11)*Ibid.*
- (12)Lewis, Autobiography.
- (13)*Ibid.*

## EXPANDING BROADCASTS INTO FOREIGN LANDS

Tom Lewis learned from his Alaska trip that using shortwave transmissions to reach troops overseas wasn't practical for any broadcasts other than news and special events. He began seeking established outlets abroad that could carry AFRS programming. With the help of the Office of War Information (OWI) and his own staff, Lewis negotiated with foreign governments and commercial stations for use of their radio facilities.

On a reciprocal benefit basis, the AFRS Program Section bartered the finest programs from American radio. In return for the programs, they provided airtime on stations at United States troop locations. It was strictly barter, no cash changed hands. To protect the rights of performing artists, musicians, writers and composers who donated their services, AFRS required that all foreign commercial stations sign strict agreements. They'd make no attempt to capitalize on the free talent.<sup>(1)</sup>

AFRS bartered time, too, from government and commercial stations in Australia and from four stations in the Hawaiian Islands. Stations in the Middle East, India, China, and South Africa also signed agreements. By the end of 1943, a total of 140 overseas government and commercial stations were broadcasting AFRS programs to American troops! Yet, despite the success of securing the agreements, there were limitations.<sup>(2)</sup>

Foreign stations had their own established audiences to satisfy. They could not always clear either the number of hours nor the ideal timeslots desired by AFRS. In turn, American troops often didn't have the patience to listen to French, Arabic, Persian, Hindustani or Chinese language programs interspersed with the AFRS broadcasts. Moreover, American-style on-the-hour programming meant little to broadcasters in the Middle and Far East. Which made it virtually impossible to produce a stable schedule that troops could consult. Finally, most of the government-owned or overseas commercial transmitters were old, in a poor state of repair. They had an unfortunate propensity for going off the air at critical moments.<sup>(3)</sup>

Lewis struggled to develop Army-operated stations broadcasting a regular schedule of programs, but the implementation was not a simple matter. To put a significant number of stations on the air in all corners of the globe would require training of broadcasters and technicians. Readily available, sturdy and reliable equipment, along with spare parts, would have to be

purchased. A distribution system for programs and a library of records that could be used in locally-produced shows would have to be created.

At first, Lewis' organization concerned itself primarily with program production and distribution. It viewed planning as only a secondary mission. Also, Lewis hadn't anticipated expenditures in the initial AFRS budget to purchase the kind of equipment needed to carry out a project of such scope.

To create the numbers of small, local stations required, AFRS received a big assist from the OWI. In January, 1943, the War Department had assigned AFRS the responsibility to install its own facilities overseas operated "by American soldiers for American soldiers." The OWI turned over to AFRS all the broadcasting stations they had installed or were in the process of installing in Alaska, the Aleutians and the United Kingdom. AFRS obtained all the necessary approvals and ventured to acquire the equipment needed to construct complete stations. Lieutenant Martin Work made the first actual purchases during a trip across the United States in December, 1942. A major procurement was then made of twelve 1,000-watt transmitters and eighteen 250-watt portable transmitters. They would serve "medium-powered" stations.

The growing mobility of the American Army demanded radio stations that were compact and very portable. They needed to cover a small area and be able set up or break down in a matter of hours in order to follow the advance of the troops. In typical Yankee ingenuity, AFRS developed a complete station consisting of a 50-watt portable transmitter, a music library and a supply of current transcriptions — all that could be packed in five suitcases!

### ANDRE BARUCH AND THE AES

While AFRS was working to establish its own stations, the initial Army Expeditionary Station overseas sprang up in much the same manner as the first stations had in Alaska. As part of the preparations for the invasion of North Africa, the Adjutant General's Office activated the First Broadcast Station Operating Detachment on October 1, 1942, at Camp Pickett, Virginia. The unit, composed of eleven officers and nineteen enlisted men, left Norfolk on October 22 attached to the 3rd Infantry Division, a component of the Western Task Force.<sup>(4)</sup>

Upon their departure, a detail consisting of two officers and five enlisted men under the command of Lieutenant Andre Baruch left the Detachment and boarded the U.S.S. *Texas*. Its mission: to operate a 5-kilowatt transmitter and broadcast instructions in French to the native military and civilian population. This was done in hopes of averting unnecessary bloodshed when the task force arrived off

the coast of North Africa. Throughout the cruise, Baruch's men operated a monitoring center for all radio propaganda, both Allied and Axis.

On invasion morning, November 8, Baruch was on the gun deck of the *Texas*, with orders to begin broadcasting at 5:00 AM. He had gotten as far as, "Bon Jour, Mesdames et Messieurs, ici Andre Baruch ...," when the coastal batteries attacked and knocked down the radio antenna, ending his effort. With an eye to posterity, the former network announcer decided to record a first-person account of the invasion. Opening his glass-disc recording machine, he began, "Good morning. It's the morning of November 8, 1942, an historic time..." He got no further before the *Texas* let loose a salvo from its own battery. The recoil knocked everything awry including the recording machine. That ended Baruch's career as a combat commentator.(5)

Landing at Port Lyautey on November 10, Baruch and his detail rejoined the other members of the First Broadcast Station Operating Detachment in Casablanca on the 14th. The Detachment had orders to take over and operate radio stations in Rabat and Casablanca. However, the French took over the Rabat station and the Americans found that no station existed in Casablanca. So, for the next three weeks the unit had little to do. Finally one day, while sitting around waiting for orders, Baruch's executive officer, Lieutenant Houston Brown proposed that they start a radio station. After some exploration of the subject, the officers agreed they could build a transmitter and get on the air. First they'd have to receive permission from the commanding General. That was George C. Patton.(6)

After much prodding, Baruch went to Patton's headquarters on December 7 and asked to see the General. Appearing "in all his glory and fury," Patton demanded to know, "What the "blank" do you want?"

Baruch's explanation apparently struck the right cord. Perhaps it was because Patton had listened to the first experimental radio station which AFRS had set up to train broadcasters at the Desert Training Center at Camp Young, California. The General had been there preparing his troops for the African campaign. In any case, Patton signed a memo giving Baruch permission to open a radio station in Casablanca.(7)

With Patton's approval in hand, the detachment borrowed a 250-watt transmitter from the French on December 9. Unfortunately, the transmitter was designed for shortwave broadcasts. Brown and his men had to rebuild it, using material they "comshawed" from Army and Navy supply depots. With a long horizontal antenna, a Presto turntable and amplifier, a borrowed microphone and seventeen ten-inch records, the station went on the air. At noon, December 15, they began, using

the name "The Army Broadcasting Service - The Voice of an American Soldier and Sailor." Baruch was proud of his men. "They had "very little talent [but] a lot of energy, and a lot of ambition."

The station broadcasted from Noon to 1:00 PM and from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M. Programming came from the detachment itself as individual soldiers and sailors volunteered their own records.

When Baruch worked with Lewis in New York before the war, he'd not even heard of AFRS. He "didn't know [Lewis] was even in the service."(8)

Baruch remembers that even with the scanty material, the station "was an immediate success. Where the listeners got their radios from, I don't know, but it seemed like every unit had a radio. We chose the frequency that was best for reception in the area and started doing fancy little things. We wrote crazy commercials and wrote funny little skits. We gave whatever news we could. We got gossip columns from the United States and stories about show business and everything that might be of interest to an American GI no matter where he was."(9)

Everything was going well until Patton's headquarters issued a directive on January 1, 1943, instructing all Army personnel to vacate the local French radio stations. Baruch's men scavenged radio parts and pieces of equipment to build a new transmitter with the increased power of 300-watts. The station relocated to the same apartment that housed the Army's radio monitoring center. They strung an antenna across an open lot to another building and by January 15, they were back on the air. It broadcasted from 11:00 am to 2:00 PM and from 3:00 PM to 8:30 PM. On Saturdays, they added more programming, half-hour, often extending the broadcast to 11:00 PM.(10)

Programming material remained scarce and the station had to scrounge from wherever it could. Yet, the station's antenna was parallel to the coast line and the radio waves skipped off the water giving greater range. Navy ships were sometimes able to hear the broadcasts from as far away as 30 miles from shore. As a result, when the sailors reached Casablanca, they often tracked down the station and contributed their records to the cause.(11)

Baruch recalls that he was not always successful in obtaining records for the station. One of his men came in one day to say he'd learned of an officer who had some records of singer Bea Wain. Baruch headed over to the officer's billet and walked into a room to find it splattered with pictures of Miss Wain – who also happened to be Baruch's wife. When Baruch mentioned that he understood the man had some of Wain's records, the officer began to sing her praises. Finally, Baruch interrupted to say that he was from the new radio station. Before he could continue or even tell the officer that Wain was his

wife, the officer responded, "You wanna borrow them? Forget it. Get your ass out of here." Baruch came back to the station empty handed and acknowledged his failure to his men. "I was afraid I was going to get my butt shot off," he explained.(12)

Baruch found that live programs created their own dangers. Once a Colonel complained to him that the station should stop "fooling around." He then asked, "Why don't you do something important and build up the foot soldier - the infantry?" Baruch asked the Colonel what he had in mind. He suggested, "Well, put on a drama, boy, put on a drama." When Baruch noted he didn't have any actors, scriptwriters, sound effects or music. The Colonel told him, "Well, I'm sure you can do it. Now, you try it." Accepting this as tantamount to an order, Baruch agreed to try.(13)

Baruch found Humphrey Bogart and Frederic March in Casablanca on a USO tour. They knew him from back in the States. The two big stars agreed to act in a radio drama if the station could come up with a script. With the help of his staff, Baruch produced a radio play titled "The Infantry-Queen of Battles." They produced the sound effects, even the sound of live bullets. They found a recording of Stravinsky's "Firebird Suite" and used it for background music. The show proved "eminently successful." Even the Colonel liked it.(14)

Despite such problems in acquiring good programming, the station succeeded in filling the obvious need of providing entertainment for the troops. Sailors aboard one ship wrote to express their appreciation and enjoyment of the radio programs. "All the men here listen every evening and enjoy it very much." The staff of the local Navy Dispensary wrote to say they noticed every day "a great improvement in the programs. We feel that you now have a program not equalled by any at home. Keep it up; you've accomplished something that was very much needed here." Another group of sailors thanked the station for its "splendid job of bringing cheer to the forces over here in Africa." A group of soldiers from an ordnance company wrote with its appreciation "for many pleasant hours of radio entertainment. More power to you!"(15)

Neither AFRS nor the Special Services Division had any idea that the Casablanca station existed. In January, 1943, General Arthur Wilson of the Army Service Forces prepared to take over command of the Casablanca area. As he did, he discussed the matter of troop entertainment with Colonel John Stanley of the Information Branch. He got the Special Services Division to order a 250-watt and a 1000-watt transmitter to be sent to North Africa. Tom Lewis dispatched Major Charles Vanda and an enlisted technician to set up the station for the General.

When they arrived on January 26, Vanda delivered a

memo to General Wilson informing him of the contents of the shipment of radio equipment. It included the two transmitters, turntables, a recording outfit and a record library. Vanda advised the General that he could put the station on the air in ten days with the proper support.(16)

At about the same time he learned that Baruch's station was already on the air, Vanda discovered that his transmitters and accompanying equipment hadn't arrived. He showed little interest in the Baruch's "freelance operation," but attempted instead to locate his missing equipment and set up his own station. Before he could, however, the 1st and 2nd Broadcast Station Operating Detachments received orders on February 19. The orders relieved them from duty with the Atlantic Base Section and assigned them to the Psychological Warfare Branch, Information and Censorship Section.

General Wilson detailed four officers and thirteen men of the 1st Operating Detachment to remain and continue operating the Casablanca station. Four days later, they received word that the War Department had placed all radio stations under the Special Services Division.(17)

Vanda finally tracked down his missing equipment. By the end of February, Baruch had an agreement to have the 1000-watt transmitter assembled and turned over to his station in Casablanca. The station also received the rest of the equipment except for the 250-watt transmitter. That was sent to Oujda to establish a station for General Mark Clark's Fifth Army.

As soon as the new equipment became operational during the first week in March, the Casablanca station eliminated its original call letters, "ABS" (Army Broadcasting Service), and substituted the call "An Army Expeditionary Station... A Radio Service for the American Soldier and Sailor."(18)

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Martin Work from Armed Forces Radio in Los Angeles had arrived in Casablanca to investigate the situation in North Africa. Almost immediately, Work had to arrange to transfer Baruch and his entire unit to Special Services after the Psychological Warfare Branch recalled them. In addition, as a result of Work's survey, still another 1000-watt transmitter was sent from the U. S. to Algiers so that a station could be established there, too.(19)

Baruch became Chief of the American Expeditionary Stations in the North African Theater with Lieutenant Brown serving as his Executive Officer and Technical Director. General Eisenhower ordered stations installed in his Command wherever it was practical to do so. In Sicily, an American Expeditionary station was on the air by August 13, 1943, even though the fighting for the island did not officially end until August 7. By the end of January, 1944, eight stations were broadcasting in the Mediterranean stretching from Casablanca to Naples.(20)

Under the direction of Baruch and Brown, the Mediterranean stations provided programming that was to become typical throughout the AFRS network during World War II. Besides the regular program package from Hollywood, the stations featured live talent shows whenever practicable. These included a choral group in which the former New York Riverside Church soloist Richard Wallgren appeared and a Black quartet known as the Overseas Serenaders. Quiz programs pitting the services against each other were also very popular. Each station had its own request shows on which it played selections from the AFRS music packages. Following the mission directive of AFRS, they also featured news at the prime times of 6:30 to 8:00 AM, at Noon and at dinner time. They supplemented the national and international news (received via short wave) with their own local news, carefully written within the limitations of war theater censorship.(21)

For the most part, the locally-produced programs followed the recommendations of letters received from the stations' audiences. If a sergeant complained that "jive kept his hives awake", the station would institute 15-minutes of slumber music at the close of the day. If a captain could not listen during the regular news periods, a station would close the broadcast day with a two-minute news summary.(22)

As time passed in North Africa, requests showed a definite trend. At the beginning, the men put an emphasis on "hot jive." By the end of 1943, however, the battle-hardened soldiers were asking for sentimental ballads.

The impact on soldiers' morale can be measured from letters such as the one Baruch received from a sergeant in an evacuation hospital. It stated, "The other evening we heard swing music and then, 'This is the American Expeditionary Station.' Goose pimples ran up and down our spines, and since then, our morale has increased one thousand percent. Last week we had a tent full of boys treated following the Sicilian Campaign. When we turned

to your swing program, smiles of joy and complete forgetfulness of their pain came over the faces of the boys. Words can't express the happiness that your programs have given to the American soldiers. So, thanks for giving us a few hours of happiness each day. Good luck!"(23)  
Labors had their rewards.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 6

- (1)Progress Report.
- (2)Ibid.
- (3)Ibid.
- (4)Andre Baruch, *The Story of an Army Expeditionary Station*, /n.d. 1943/cited hereafter as Baruch, *Story*.
- (5)Interview with Andre Baruch, July 8, 1983.
- (6)Ibid.; Baruch, *Story*.
- (7)Ibid.
- (8)Ibid.
- (9)Baruch interview.
- (10)Baruch, *Story*.
- (11)Baruch interview.
- (12)Ibid.
- (13)Ibid.
- (14)Ibid.
- (15)Letters in AFRTS files, January and February, 1943.
- (16)*American Expeditionary Stations, North African Theater, History and Operations*, /n.d., 1944/, cited hereafter as *Stations History*; Captain Charles Vanda to General Arthur Wilson, January 26, 1943.
- (17)Ibid.; Baruch, *Story*.
- (18)Ibid.
- (19)*Stations History*.
- (20)Ibid.; Ralph Carson, *On the Air Over There*, Liberty, December 4, 1943, p 56.
- (21)Carson, *On the Air Over There*, p 57.
- (22)Ibid.

## ARMED FORCES PIONEERS IN PROGRAMMING

Programming always remained at the heart of AFRS. If General Osborn had selected a newsman to create and run military broadcasting, the whole character of the operation might have assumed a different personality. But Osborn didn't select a newsman – he chose Tom Lewis.

Lewis had spent his broadcasting career on the entertainment side of radio. He'd produced programs during the time when advertising agencies created programming and sold it directly to the networks. He knew programming. He believed the entertainment "side of the house" was paramount to provide the troops with recreation and relaxation. Once he had the audience, he could more readily get across the military's morale and informational messages. It was an excellent doctrine, one that would prove correct. Since Lewis recruited his original staff from the entertainment side as well, it was natural that the "Memorandum of Projected Initial Program Schedule" contained many commercial type programs.

To begin programming as quickly as possible, Lewis created the AFRS Program Production Section. Although his audience survey was not yet completed, Lewis' original staffers had the commercial broadcast experience to analyze audience preferences, albeit civilian. They'd find the differences to military minimal. Besides, their civilian orientation diminished the tendency of armed forces broadcasters to propagandize in military-ese, much to the delight of their homesick clientele.

Yet, their programming would not be a simple rehash of civilian fare. Erik Barnouw, in the Office of Information and Education, later observed how the new citizen-soldier audience developed different tastes from its civilian interests. "Although civilians in uniform make up the audience," he said, "it is not a civilian audience. A new, different life, remote from familiar surroundings, the constant focus on the task of war, these condition its tastes, reactions, and emotional needs. Research...gives us more detailed insight into the factors involved. The Army's detailed studies, reports and analyses on the psychology of the overseas soldier have formed an invaluable basis on which to proceed."

Regardless of what research said, no one in the beginning could be sure what new programming should contain. The primary concern was simply to get started as quickly as possible.

The initial programming plan as set forth in the "Memorandum of Projected Initial Program Schedule," called for AFRS to develop a series of shows especially for the servicemen. However, it provided only a tentative idea of the direction AFRS programming would take. Major Mann Holiner, the second AFRS Program Production Section Chief, explained. "Our audience wasn't available for questioning that would bring immediate answers. All we could do was gather all information that was readily available, to apply our best judgment to the program and then go to work." (2)

### THE FIRST AFRS SHOWS

The first show that appeared, "Mail Call," retained the same name as the proposed program in the memo. The format called for a 30-minute show prepared weekly with the cooperation of the major motion picture studios. It would take the form of a letter written by the folks at home to a serviceman abroad. The final product more closely resembled "Command Performance," which was still being produced by the Army's Bureau of Public Relations.

The first "Mail Call" was a half-hour, live program, produced and recorded on August 11, 1942, at the Hollywood CBS studios. True Boardman produced it. Bob Lee and Jerry Lawrence wrote the script. The cast included Lewis' famous wife, Loretta Young, as the Mistress of Ceremonies, Bob Hope, Frances Langford, and comic Jerry Colona. Captain Tom McKnight soon replaced Boardman as the producer. As time went on, many AFRS writers would routinely contribute scripts for the shows.

The first shows included short sequences from current motion pictures. After the thirteenth program, the format changed to featuring a U.S. state. Early programs contained too much sentimentalism and the explicit messages failed to help improve troop morale. so the format evolved to entertainment containing more implied messages. Ultimately, "Mail Call" became a musical variety show featuring leading Hollywood entertainers reflecting the response of the troops. And it became a hit.

Although some disagreement exists, "Melody Roundup" was likely the second AFRS program. Initially transcribed on August 28, 1942, cowboy crooner Roy Rogers hosted the first four programs. Subsequently, the fifteen-minute show featured many leading Country Western entertainers.

In contrast, "Personal Album," initially recorded on October 1, 1942, featured Bing Crosby as the host, and more popular singers. Lieutenant Colonel Ted Sherdeman, producer of the show, recalled that the original intent of the program was to feature voice-track announcements of female singers introducing their commercial recordings. Female vocalists appeared on twenty-three of the first thirty quarter-hour shows. Ultimately, the PPS changed the format to a completely live show with a featured singer,

accompanying artists and an announcer. The guest of the week spoke personally to the audience, but, unlike "Command Performance" and "Mail Call," he didn't dedicate songs to specific servicemen.

"Yarns for Yanks," which AFRS first transcribed on October 3, was an adaptation by Lawrence and Lee from their civilian program "Nite Cap Yarns." The broadcasts contained fifteen-minute human-interest stories told in several voices by one man. Frank Graham recorded the first eighteen programs after which many Hollywood stars appeared in the series.

"Jubilee," was a Mann Holiner production, first transcribed for the troops on October 9. Holiner, in civilian life, had been a specialist in the production of black theatricals. He'd produced the "Blackbird" reviews on Broadway and his highly successful show also called "Jubilee," had launched the careers of many of the most famous black variety entertainers. His military version was a legendary hit.

When the Program Production Section (PPS) decided to use Holiner to create a program featuring black artists, an original planning memo proposed a program entitled "Freedom's People." It would aim "directly for, at, and to represent the large number of 'colored' troops." The Army thought, "Here we can use some of the magnificent recorded programs of 'colored' music prepared by the WPA and by the Office of Education. Because of the importance of the morale factors involved – this show should develop into an ambitious production."<sup>(3)</sup>

Holiner didn't believe the show should be slanted to *any* certain audience. Instead, its entertainment should provide a morale lift to all troops, white or black. As the production idea evolved, the PPS decided to produce a fine variety show using leading talent. To avoid the impression of slanting the program and so spotlighting the existence of black-white conflicts within the military, AFRS took the name of Holiner's successful radio program "Jubilee."

Ethel Waters, Rex Ingram, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra and the Hal Johnson Choir made up the cast for the first program. Charles Vanda and the civilian writers in Hollywood donated their time to create the script. The program itself established historical foundations of AFRS policy in regard to blacks and other minority groups. AFRS would produce no special morale programs for any minority during the war.

In 1944, General Benjamin Davis, the Army's only black general officer at the time, made a special trip to AFRS headquarters. He asked that the staff slant "Jubilee" even more to help improve black morale. Holiner disagreed, but the staff thought Davis's proposal had merit. Holiner argued that slanting "Jubilee" would bring to light the very existence of race problems within the military. Rather than improve black morale, slanting "Jubilee" would inherently

make it worse. Holiner felt that the interests of the Armed Forces would be best served by completely overlooking the existence of such difficulties. He convinced General Davis.

Following the meeting, Truman Gibson Jr., a civilian aide to Secretary of War Stimson, wrote to Lewis thanking him for the briefings he'd given Davis. Gibson added that the inspection had convinced him that Lewis's organization was "easily the best from an administrative point of view that I've thus far come across. The Assistant Secretary of War expressed particular interest in my description of your many activities and your intentions to present material about the 'Negro.'"<sup>(4)</sup>

When Major Austin Peterson later toured the Pacific, however, he found that morale was particularly low among black troops. So he gave priority to requests for black entertainers appearing on "Command Performance." Until that time, it had only featured whites. Bob Welch, the producer of both "Command Performance" and "Jubilee," responded to the requirement. He put blacks on "CP" and, if he felt their appearance would enhance the show, he put white artists on "Jubilee" as well. As a result, both shows became integrated, another important – and foundational – precedent for AFRS.<sup>(5)</sup>

The first religious program, "Music for Sunday," debuted on February 2, 1943. It highlighted thirty minutes of music of all faiths and denominations. Originally, the producers assembled "Music for Sunday" from music tracks obtained from radio broadcasts and from other tracks they got from non-broadcast sources. Occasionally, they recorded special music tracks for the series. A narration recorded by an AFRS announcer linked all the segments. It remained the major religious show.

One of AFRS' most successful ideas was the feature in "Command Performance" wherein the American fighting man could "command" the talents of any American performer. To be sure, not all entertainers relished the idea that they might be called at any time to appear on "Command Performance," "Mail Call" or the other AFRS shows. Yet, except for Clark Gable, Joan Crawford and a few others who had real problems appearing in front of a microphone and a live audience, few entertainers dared to voice objections when called upon. Fortunately, most saw their appearances as an opportunity to contribute directly to the war effort. People like Bob Hope, Doris Day, Edgar Bergen, Bing Crosby and Jerry Colona became regulars on AFRS programs.

There were limits to how often artists could be asked to give of their time. The *Memorandum of Projected Initial Program Schedule* explained, "It is the position of the artists' organizations that since the government does not expect an automobile manufacturer, for example, whose stock-in-trade is automobiles, to provide them free for the armed forces, neither should the government expect a performing

artist, playing an instrument, to provide his talents free. The organizations generally make exceptions in the cases of outstanding stars who receive favorable publicity for their cooperation and who by virtue of their large incomes can better afford to contribute to a greater number of free performances."

In order to prevent exploitation of star performers and to spread the talent around, Tom Lewis created a Talent Subsection. Sergeants George Rosenberg and Lester Linski and Corporal Barron Polan composed the group. Before entering the military, the three had been talent agents with much experience in artist procurement. They quickly developed a standard operating procedure for securing talent. The AFRS writers of producers of the individual programs would ask the Talent Subsection to request the desired performer. In turn, the Subsection would contact the Hollywood Victory Committee (the Hollywood industry-wide coordinating agency) who scheduled the appearances at no charge to the government. Unless the artist had a real conflict with his or her schedule, the entertainer normally agreed to the request.

Few problems developed. Some minor difficulties occurred when writers, producers and the administrative staff tried to obtain artists directly. This caused popular artists to feel put upon. Some expressed reluctance to accept a request too soon after a previous appearance. AFRS also had difficulty in obtaining New York talent because of the distances involved in traveling. Usually the only time a performer residing in the East appeared was when he or she visited the West Coast. Finally, overseas stations sometimes failed to mention a performer's previous appearance when the entertainer visited the front as part of a USO tour. That led to more complaints.

For the most part, however, the contribution of those in the entertainment field cannot be overestimated. Their appearances on many programs enabled AFRS to produce these shows in-house. The absence of this capability would have severely limited the scope of the entertainment that AFRS provided. Early on, AFRS began to distribute many of the commercially-produced programs – first by short wave and later on discs. However, these commercial shows didn't focus on the man in uniform like the AFRS programs did. It was also impossible to include "infomercials" in them, as the service could do with its own shows.

Nonetheless, the in-house shows not by themselves fill the broadcast schedules of the stations. Nor could they alone bring the homefront to the troops in the field, and that was important. The barren soil of Iwo Jima might seem less alien if Marines could listen to Jack Benny on Tuesday night just as they had done in their own homes. The in-house products were unique, but they bore only a general resemblance to network programming. So, for both practical and mission reasons, AFRS turned to commercial

programs for most of its programming.

Robert Sherwood, wartime OWI Overseas Division Chief, took credit for developing the practice of deleting commercial messages on government short wave. According to Sherwood, "The decommercialization was entirely my responsibility, I thought it would be a serious mistake for the United States to speak to the world with the voice of salesmanship. I met a surprising amount of argument when I directed that commercials must be eliminated. Some officers insisted that the men liked the commercials, which made them feel at home. I clinched my case when hungry men of Bataan heard a description of the rich, creamy goodness of some ice cream. It disgusted them."(6)

John Houseman, the East Cost OWI short-wave programming chief, reported that the OWI deleted commercial announcements from the beginning. Neither sponsors nor the various unions complained.(7)

Lewis never considered including commercials in the domestic programs AFRS included in its schedule. When he approached the ad agencies, networks and commercial sponsors to use their programs, he received immediate permission for AFRS to edit and distribute their programs overseas. Through arrangements with the talent and musician unions and the copyright owners of material used, the military received rights to rebroadcast all such material. The American Federation of Musicians even exempted the AFRS from regular "stand-by orchestra fee" for the rebroadcast of transcribed shows, on the condition that the AFRS programs contain no commercials.

AFRS had several other reasons for deciding to "denature" their programs. First, commercial announcements would tend to make men desire things they couldn't obtain: ice cream, cola, or cosmetically-enhanced wives or sweethearts. Second, since AFRS couldn't use all commercial programs, the advertisers on a non-selected program might suffer disadvantage. Finally, when AFRS began to use BBC facilities to broadcast its programs, BBC policy itself forbade commercials.

Besides the advertisements, AFRS quickly found it had to censor material that would give comfort to the enemy, create morale problems, or ones that just lacked timeliness. Jokes about coal strikes and defense workers might well not be funny to a soldier in a foxhole. Public service announcements promoting conservation of scarce materials might give information to the enemy who surely monitored AFRS broadcasts.

Decisions on program selection rested with the AFRS Program Board. Initially, their choices reflected the preferences of the American listening public as a whole. As time went on, however, the Board made changes based on letters it received. The troops didn't want westerns or programs featuring juveniles. They liked mystery dramas with a strong touch of horror. Within the changes, the Program

Board still followed the practice of selecting the top-rated American shows.

Finally, besides the education and information shows and the commercial broadcasts, AFRS provided news, sports and special events daily. They applied no censorship of content to the real-time broadcasts except in the matter of actual military security.

From the very beginning, Lewis believed that the troops should receive the same news and information Americans back home were receiving, both the good and the bad. The troops would receive all the news in time by letter anyway. If AFRS presented the news accurately, it would gain credibility and thereby acceptance of its education and information programming as well. Such acceptance was very important.

Audiences, both civilian and military, who listened to AFRS, came to trust its news. Credibility and acceptance. It took a lot of hard work and some very dedicated people to accomplish it, but AFRS did it.

They had forged still another history-making legacy.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 7

- (1) Erik Barnouw, "Radio Programs for Troop Education," *Education Outlook*, March 1945, p 19.
- (2) Mann Holiner in Thomas Lewis's *JANC Radio Sub committee 1944 Report*, January 20, 1944, p 20.
- (3) *Memorandum of Projected Initial Program Schedule*, p 27.
- (4) Truman Gibson Jr. to Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lewis, May 1944.
- (5) AFRS, *Negro Policy Memorandum*, n.d./1944.
- (6) Robert Sherwood to T.S. DeLay, July 4, 1950.
- (7) John Houseman to T.S. DeLay, July 19, 1950.

## CREATIVE PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION

AFRS expected to use short-wave to deliver its programming overseas. The Coordinator of Information's Office and later the Office of War Information had used privately-owned short-wave facilities to carry on its "psychological warfare" or propaganda campaign. Because the radio assets of the U.S. were inadequate when compared with both our Allies and the Axis, Congress appropriated the money needed for an upgrade to new and more powerful transmitters. By the fall of 1942, the OWI had gained control of all such facilities.

Tom Lewis determined during his visit to Alaska in June, 1942, that short-wave could not serve as the medium of delivery in the long term. Nonetheless, AFRS used the OWI facilities for its initial broadcasts.

In turn, the AFRS programming benefited the OWI's own radio propaganda campaign directed toward the Axis. The enemy had a strong interest in what the War and Navy Departments were saying to their fighting men. From broadcasts, he could possibly learn about the character of his opposition and how it might be expected to fight. As a result, he inclined to reduce his "jamming" of OWI programs in order to eavesdrop on their broadcasts.

Until AFRS took over all short-wave operations in September, 1943, it remained a guest of OWI. Coordinating broadcast schedules was a problem. More serious were the technical problems of using shortwave to reach troops in widely scattered areas. Shortwave could carry news, sports, and other real time features with acceptable quality, but its reception always remained subject to weather and atmospheric conditions. AFRS couldn't rely on it to provide regularly-scheduled entertainment programs that required a constant, strong signal. Lewis and his staff had to find another way to broadcast its programs.

### THE "BUDDY KIT"

Major Gordon Hittenmark, a Washington D.C. radio announcer, joined the Morale Services Division in 1941 to develop his idea of a "Buddy Kit" for troops in the field. With a Carnegie Corporation grant of \$100,000, the Morale Services hired Hollywood recording specialist Irving Fogel in January, 1942, to help Hittenmark create the "B-Kit." The completed entertainment package contained a portable long- and short-wave AC/DC battery receiver, batteries, antennas, and tubes. The unit also had a hand-wound 78-to-

33-1/3 RPM turntable with acoustic and electric pickups and a supply of needles. The Army provided 48 current phonograph records and twenty-four 1/2 hour transcriptions of domestic commercial broadcasts. Some of the kits included a microphone and two small speakers to turn it into a public address system. To provide additional leisure-time relaxation, the Army also placed six paperback books and seven harmonicas in the package!

Hardware came off the shelf but the 33-1/3 RPM transcription represented a new development. The radio industry's 16-inch transcription was too large and made of heavy, but fragile shellac. With a second \$400,000 Carnegie grant, Fogel developed a 12-inch, vinylite disk with 156 grooves to the inch that would play for fifteen minutes. The vinylite transcription was light-weight and nearly unbreakable, and it could withstand diverse climatic conditions.

The Radio Section had no funds for obtaining records and transcriptions for inclusion. So, Fogel explained his needs to the World Broadcasting System, a New York transcription production company. Acting as an intermediary for the Army, the company asked the ad agencies and sponsors to include their programs in the "B Kits". There was public relations value in keeping their productions and entertainers before the servicemen and in contributing to the war effort. As a result, the broadcasting industry donated over a million 12-inch transcriptions to the Army. Unlike the AFRS decommercializing of the programs it sent overseas, the transcriptions sent with the "B Kits" were exactly as originally aired.

By the time Lewis became head of AFRS in May, 1942, the Radio Section had produced only a few "B Kits." The Army gave them to units at ports of embarkation. Once in the field, the kits provided their minimal entertainment package only within range of the unit's speakers.

Even so, the B-Kits brought residual benefits to AFRS. Sending programs on disks directly to the troops was one way AFRS could distribute its shows without relying on short-wave or OWI's facilities. While obtaining their transcriptions, Hittenmark and Fogel established excellent lines of contact. They gained access to commercial broadcasters who could provide program material on a much larger and more formal basis.

When Program Production Section had begun to function, Lewis turned his attention to the distribution of his product. Even with its advantages, delivering broadcasting by disk presented some practical problems.

The AFRS Hollywood location didn't have anywhere near the processing and pressing capacity of facilities on the East Coast. Even so, AFRS manufactured the disks in L.A. Several things compensated for any shortcomings in manufacturing locally. First, staffer Irving Fogel, a transferee from the Morale Branch, used his contacts in Hollywood to get them made. Second, manufacturing in L.A.

Several things compensated for any shortcomings in manufacturing locally. First, staffer Irving Fogel, a transferee from the Morale Branch, used his contacts in Hollywood to get them made. Second, manufacturing in L.A. eliminated any long-distance shipping of the recording masters, which would have been detrimental to the quality of the final pressing. Finally, being close to the manufacturing facilities, AFRS could supervise editing and decommercializing of the shows.

Before World War II, virtually all network radio programs were broadcast live. In order to create a similar schedule in the four time zones, nationwide shows broadcast twice. Local stations used transcriptions for music libraries, commercial announcements and provincial programs, but many of the larger stations had policies forbidding use of any transcribed materials. Only the Mutual Broadcasting System allowed transcriptions to be used in its programming nationally or on its own locally-operated stations. Because live broadcasting was the norm, few manufacturing plants existed to produce transcriptions. The major ones were subsidiaries of phonograph record companies located primarily in New York.

AFRS faced a major challenge in expanding transcription facilities in the Los Angeles area. They were not alone in making demands on the transcription industry. The Treasury Department, the recruiting organizations, the war information agencies, and many private groups began using transcriptions to reach radio audiences. The Army itself, in its early programs to the troops and in supplying the "B-Kits," added to the demands. Since Lewis had worked on the creative side of broadcasting, he had to rely on Fogel's expertise in setting up the technical aspects of recording the AFRS programs.

Transcribing the programs allowed flexibility for the field stations to broadcast at the hours best suited to the troops in each theater. It provided security control over the material broadcast. Finally, it maintained reception quality without being at the mercy of climatic conditions or atmospheric disturbances. By transcribing shows, AFRS made the best use of talent and was able to give its programs the widest possible distribution.(1)

Vinylite transcriptions had several other advantages. By simply pressing more disks, AFRS met the needs of the ever-increasing number of stations, vinylite didn't collect dust. That meant a lot in areas such as North Africa and the South Pacific where the coral sand quickly trashed ordinary records. Finally, vinylite recordings provided better reproduction of sound than shellac transcriptions. Besides, war conditions had drastically decreased supplies of shellac.

Lewis and Fogel faced a major task in developing facilities that could meet their needs within the West

Coast's small and overtaxed transcription industry. They used their political influence to help secure necessary building permits and electronic equipment for the transcription industry to expand their facilities. They obtained an A-1 wartime national priority which assured that the necessary materials and personnel to build the facilities and staff the plants would be provided quickly.

With Fogel often away from Hollywood on developmental activities, his deputy, Victor Quan, assumed much of the responsibility for producing transcriptions. Quan, before receiving a direct commission as a Captain in January, 1943, had worked as a chief recording engineer at C.P. MacGregor Studios in Los Angeles.

To serve as recording director for the Technical Production Section, Fogel arranged to transfer Technical Sergeant Edward de la Penna from the Signal Corps to AFRS. Before his induction in November, 1942, de la Penna had helped assemble AFRS programs as an engineer at the Los Angeles Radio Recorders Laboratories.

Neither wire nor tape recording techniques developed sufficiently until after World War II. So, AFRS made all its original recordings by using electronically-motivated needle etchings on acetate disks revolving at 33-1/3 RPM.

AFRS had no studios, recording equipment nor editing facilities. They rented space as needed. For programs such as "Command Performance," "Mail Call," and "Jubilee," performed before live audiences, they booked studios at NBC, CBS and Don Lee-Mutual. In order to capture the sounds of the service audience, they produced parts of "G.I. Journal" at the Hollywood Canteen.

AFRS sent both its original programs and the recorded domestic shows over telephone lines to commercial recording labs. There, military personnel did the decommercializing and editing. For the most part, the recording procedures used were standard to the transcription industry. They etched the sound tracks onto fifteen-minute recording disks, and used the overlapping system of recording to insure no loss of signal.

Once they recorded a commercial domestic program, the editors went to work using the standard industry "mechanical-electronic" editing process of the industry. The editor listened to the show and wrote down on a work sheet where deletions were to be made. He then re-recorded the program, lifting the recording stylus at the points where the commercials appeared. Editors used the same technique to remove sensitive material such as jokes about strikes, activities of girlfriends, etc.

This process was simple enough, but it created gaps that remained a problem for some time. To deal with it, they tried various plans, including the substitution of

**background music and informational spots.** Despite the apparent desire of the troops to hear the domestic programs with the commercials remaining, AFRS continued to believe the reasons for decommercializing remained valid. In any case, in February, 1943, AFRS created the Domestic Rebroadcast Subsection (DRS). They selected Elliot Lewis, no relation to Tom, a Hollywood radio actor and producer, to head it. In December, 1943, Dresser Dahlstead, also from the Hollywood radio industry, became Lewis' assistant. Together, they developed several techniques to fill the holes created by decommercializing.

Lewis and Dahlstead built a backlog of musical selections played by the orchestra usually heard during the program. For example, they collected a special library of Phil Harris Orchestra music to use on the Jack Benny Show for which Harris regularly played. Introduced by the show's announcer, they'd simply edit in a selection from the library. Often, one selection would fill the complete gap created by decommercializing. Eventually, DRS developed the technique further by having a show's announcer and orchestra cut special tracks that could be inserted. This fit into a program better acoustically than using a track derived from a commercial recording made under recording studio conditions.

The opening and closing of shows caused special problems because a show's sponsor and product were often announced several times. To solve this problem, Lewis had the cast and orchestra of a program record special openings and closings and then substituted them for the domestic segments. The development of these special tracks led to a third technique where editors could produce whole new programs from decommercialized broadcasts. In these programs, like "Front Line Theater," "Globe Theater," and "Mystery Theater," actual drama programming came from domestic broadcasts. The orchestra, announcers and masters of ceremonies cut special opening, closing and linking tracks to fit the material into the AFRS format.

Crucial to the success of substituting special material was the matching of the acoustical qualities of the original with the assembled tracks. Listeners could readily recognize the differences. It was important to create the feeling that the audience was listening to an actual broadcast. So, the DRS recorded its tracks in the same studio as the original program. They even used the same microphone placement whenever possible. Actual quality of the final product depended on the ability of the editor and engineer to combine the various tracks in the least obstructive manner.

The development of AFRS' editing and assembling techniques may well have been their most significant contemporary contribution to the broadcast industry.

The editing techniques themselves were similar to those used in editing motion pictures. Electronic engineers in radio understood the process long before World War II. While they used editing techniques on occasion, they could always re-record a transcribed show containing a flaw. Most of the people who joined AFRS had come from the commercial radio industry. So, it's understandable that they produced its early programs in the same way as the major network shows.

Soon, the Program Production Section began using the editing techniques developed by the DRS in putting together its own programs. By the middle of 1943, AFRS edited most of its shows down to the correct length from longer recording sessions. "Command Performance," for example, usually ran for 45 to 50 minutes, from which the editors selected the best 30 minutes for the completed show. Entertainers didn't have to rush to complete their performances within the time constraints of live programs. They began to relax, and producers obtained superior performances for their completed program.

After the war, entertainers began urging their civilian producers and networks to do their shows by transcriptions instead of the real time format. Bing Crosby in particular, tried to have his NBC show done on transcription. The network refused to revise its prohibition on transcriptions to accommodate him, so Crosby held off signing a new contract at the end of '45. ABC had no policy against the use of transcribed shows and was trying to strengthen its program schedule. So, in the Fall of '46, Crosby joined ABC and did his show by transcriptions. Most of the other major stars began agitating to do their shows in the same way. By the 1950-51 season, most of the major shows were using this technique.

Once AFRS had completed a show's transcription, the disk had to be processed into a master used to stamp out the records. The electroplating process used in the industry for many years was a time-consuming process. By April, of 1945, AFRS had helped to develop a high-speed system which cut the processing time in about half. As a result, AFRS could release special events shows soon after their occurrence.

The final step in the process was the stamping of the records. The only real question was the manner in which a show would be put on a disk. Early on, AFRS pressed transcriptions so that the first half of one program would be on the first record, and the second half on another. They recorded another show on the flip sides. When using two turntables, this format enabled the broadcasting engineer to go from one record to the other with no gap. However, if he lost one of the two records, or if a record got damaged enroute, he'd effectively lose two shows instead of one. So, beginning in May, 1943, AFRS pressed all its shows back to back on a single record.

This decision simplified distribution and production and the method remained in effect throughout the remainder of the war.

Since AFRS faced great difficulties in replacing defective transcriptions, it established careful inspection procedures throughout the production process, however, this AFRS operation was little different from what the industry had been doing before the war.

But, all that would change. Read on.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 8

- (1) Thomas Lewis, *JANC Radio Subcommittee 1944 Report*, January 20, 1944, p 35.

## BROADCAST PERSONALITY MEETS MILITARY PROCEDURE

The soldier listening to Armed Forces Radio during World War II had little interest in the process it took to create programming and deliver it overseas. The man in the field, like the radio audiences in the United States, took the music, sports, news and information for granted – as long as his favorite shows arrived at their scheduled times. The only names he associated with AFRS were of the stars themselves. Even so, the staff, with their backgrounds in commercial radio, gave the organization its unique character. They ensured its wartime success, and helped establish precedents that have survived to this day.

With Tom Lewis as the driving force behind military radio, the organization approached the sophistication of a network operation. His staff attempted to function as it would have in normal commercial setting.

AFRS personnel had reason to feel at home. They were stationed in Hollywood, first at the Fox Studio on Western Avenue and then in permanent facilities on Santa Monica Boulevard. They did the same work with the same radio stars with whom they'd worked as civilians. Virtually the entire staff had joined the Army, either voluntarily or through the draft, yet AFRS had no barracks or military quarters. Instead, those from the Los Angeles area simply commuted from their homes. Out-of-towners found their own accommodations. Thus, except for the uniforms, the life of an AFRS soldier was not the classical prototype.

Lewis had brought many of his men into AFRS directly from their commercial radio jobs. He and they had little or no knowledge of the military. Some had even bypassed basic training.(1)

On the other hand, the Army considered AFRS a military organization, and its men were to be soldiers first and broadcasters second. It was a tricky tightrope Lewis and his staff walked, between the creative chaos of broadcasting and the rigid discipline of the Armed Forces.

Creative chaos usually won. For writer Bob Lee, who helped Lewis draw up the blueprint for AFRS, the headquarters existed in "a marvelous and creative confusion." He says it was Lewis' "personal magnetism, an enormous personal magnetism," and his prestige that brought the greatest writers, directors, and musicians to AFRS. It instilled in them "a loyalty and purpose that

was simply wonderful." Tom Lewis's attitude was "that of an inspired gardener. He walked from one plot to another, watered the plants and put fertilizer in where it was needed." Alan Hewitt, who worked in the decommercializing unit, said this effort produced "a fantastic creative staff and a fantastic output every week."(2)

Tom Lewis ran AFRS as he had his civilian productions. He created an operation that was much like the major networks. The Army, on the other hand, had little experience in dealing with the likes of Tom Lewis and the commercial radio industry. Since AFRS functioned as a support agency with few men and a limited budget, strategic military planners paid him little attention. Lewis charismatically navigated through the highest echelons of both the Army and the broadcasting business and had little problem filling his material and manpower needs in Washington. In Hollywood, his staff had the freedom to create programming that would break new ground and give birth to a worldwide broadcasting operation on its own merit.

### CHAOS VERSUS THE ARMY

Without exception, Lewis's staff appreciated the fortunate circumstances that had enabled them to continue to use their civilian skills while in uniform. Jerry Hausner, who fulfilled many roles including announcer, editor and official photographer, was too old to have gone overseas to combat. He also failed in his request for an assignment to the AFRS station in Rome after its liberation.(3)

Alan Hewitt worked with Hausner. He remembers that some of the men "felt self-conscious" about being in Hollywood and put in for overseas duty. "O.K., I wore glasses then," he said. "I was near-sighted. Oddly enough, I qualified as a sharpshooter with a rifle, and I never had known anything about guns. It was unlikely that I was going to see service in the trenches, but I could have worked at radio stations whether in Asia or Europe. I don't think any of us suspected that we'd really see combat, but being energetic and imaginative people, there was an experience, a personal experience, to be had from going overseas."(4)

The Army did recognize the possible effect that their office environment might have on the staff's morale. Hewitt recalls that officers came out from Washington to give pep talks. He told us "not to feel guilty because we were here, not to feel any shame about not being overseas when our friends and people were getting killed. We should not feel shame or guilt because we were doing a very important job. We got those morale talks several times."(5)

While they did not assume the risks of death, the men

in the AFRS headquarters otherwise worked just like any other soldier. They carried out their assignments without reference to the clock or themselves personally. It was a "rather bizarre exotic place" writer Lloyd Shearer found when he transferred to AFRS in 1943, referring to the juxtaposition of his profession and the Army.(6)

Each man who worked at AFRS headquarters has his own recollections of life as a soldier/broadcaster in wartime Hollywood. Writers such as Sherwood Schwartz were able to ply their craft in the service much as they had in commercial radio. For Schwartz, however, the transition from writing for Bob Hope to writing AFRS programs proved to be "extraordinary." One week he was touring Army camps with Hope writing shows and having dinner with generals. Two weeks later, he was undergoing basic training with buck privates.

After his induction, Schwartz tried to arrange for an immediate assignment to his civilian specialty. Unfortunately, when he ended up doing his eight weeks of basic training, he lost hope of becoming a broadcaster. The very day before his unit shipped out to the Aleutians, Schwartz received orders to report to AFRS. He was delighted.

"Considering what I knew about myself as a fighting man with a rifle shooting at somebody, anything I could do at a typewriter would be better. I'm convinced of that."(7)

Once settled into AFRS, Schwartz resumed writing comedy, producing sequences for all the major shows and responding to calls from the directors "where the need arose." Schwartz recalls his most memorable Army experience, which also produced "the biggest laugh I've ever had in my life."

"We were working on the two-part *Dick Tracy Wedding*." It featured Crosby as Tracy, Bob Hope as Flat Top, Frank Sinatra as Shakey, and Jimmy Durante as the Mole. Catching Flat Top in the midst of a crime, Tracy confronted him, 'This is Dick Tracy. Stick'em up.' In turn, Shakey surprised Tracy and ordered him to 'Stick'em up.' The Mole was then to appear with the same command. Instead of saying 'Stick'em up,' Durante ad libbed, 'Stick it up! Hot dog!' That produced a seven-minute laugh from the soldier audience attending the session."

That ad lib might have worked in civilian life, but this was the Army. As Schwartz ruefully recalls, the censor found the dialogue more than offensive and excised the whole scene "because that was not fit for soldiers' ears."(8)

Such censorship problems were, of course, not unique to AFRS writers during the 1940's. What Schwartz and his fellow staffers hadn't faced during their civilian radio days was the Army's attempt to impose military discipline onto AFRS. As one can imagine, a general disregard

of Army regulations developed within the professionals within their first year. So, the Army assigned a regular officer to AFRS, Captain Virginal Petito. Petito, who'd been serving as the Adjutant to Frank Capra's film unit, became Lewis's Adjutant with orders to straighten up the radio soldiers.

He was very "GI" and very eager. "You guys are in the Army now. I don't give a damn whether you're going to do radio shows or not, you're going to fulfill your military duties. So you're gonna stand inspection every morning." Petito initiated an 0600 roll call and drill, before going to their offices and beginning work. Then the trouble started.(9)

Schwartz said trying to write jokes at 6:15 in the morning was "a little much." As a result, he and his colleagues initially just ignored Petito's efforts. Hausner said, "the guy doesn't know what the hell we're supposed to do here. We know the Commanding Officer well enough to call him by his first name. This guy has no power at all unless we give him power."

So, with roll call over, the men fell into the habit of going to breakfast. As Schwartz explained, they'd come back "at a more reasonable hour, like 7:30, and start the mind going on funny things."(10)

Now, Petito believed the Army was the Army. Once he realized what was happening, he posted a notice. Anybody who failed to go immediately to his desk after roll call would be put on work detail policing the grounds. In company defiance, Schwartz and his colleagues went off to breakfast the next morning anyway. They returned to find the officer waiting with orders to get into fatigues and pull the weeds from the officers' parking lot.(11)

When the other AFRS officers arrived for work that day, Austin Peterson, one of Lewis's original recruits and top aides, demanded to know what was going on. One of the men explained, "Well, we were naughty and we're pulling weeds as punishment."

"Who's writing the week's programs?" he asked.

"Who knows?" was the response, citing only Petito's orders. Peterson headed straight for Petito's office.

"Captain, if you have men who pull weeds for a living, would you have them write jokes as punishment?" He continued, "When you have men who write jokes, you cannot punish them by making them pull weeds."(12) Petito didn't give up easily, on occasion, he'd call a meeting of the entire staff to inform them that they were going to observe military courtesy. "Everybody'd listen and then go on about doing whatever they had to do." Petito slowly "got the message that there were other things to do and that we couldn't spend all our time just keeping house and playing Army," Jerry Hausner said.(13)

Military rank had no meaning. As in civilian broadcasting, money and symbols of status didn't matter during the creative process. As a civilian writer, Schwartz often had to work as an equal partner with a producer who earned less than he did. "Money doesn't matter in the creative process, and neither does rank. In a creative situation, it's only opinion and arrival at the truth," states Schwartz.(14)

At AFRS, Private Bob Welch, the producer of "Command Performance," would tell Sergeant George Rosenberg, the talent producer, which stars he needed for his program. During the show, Welch would direct Major Meredith Wilson, the conductor of the orchestra.

Lester Linsk, a talent agent in civilian life and one of the talent recruiters for AFRS, also remembers how little heed Private Welch paid to rank. In preparation for the first visit to AFRS by senior commanders from Washington, Lewis prepared the staff to brief the contingent on each of their jobs. When the officers arrived in Welch's office, he was on the phone, apparently involved in a very important conversation. In truth, he was talking with Linsk who was telling him that the officers were on their way upstairs. Instead of immediately standing up and launching into his presentation, Welch continued to talk with Linsk while balancing from foot to foot. Finally, he looked up kind of sheepishly, talked some more and hung up. Then he explained to the general that he was talking with Lester Linsk, as if Linsk were someone of the importance of Eisenhower. The general never questioned it!(15)

On occasion, Tom Lewis would have to argue with Washington. If the military wanted radio, it would have to accept their flexibility and even a lack of overt activity. On one inspection trip, for example, a general discovered a writer in his cubical in front of a typewriter staring into space. He finally asked the man what he did. When he responded, "I'm a writer, Sir," the general observed, "I've been standing here for five minutes and you haven't written a word!"

Linsk acknowledges that some staff members may have respected rank and military command more than others. AFRS presented an unusual circumstance.

"I, for example, was the producer of 'Showtime' featuring Dinah Shore. I'd sit in the control room with the rank of sergeant, I think ultimately a tech sergeant, telling colonels what to do. How much military chain of command can you have under those conditions?" Linsk accepted the reality that he was in the Army all right. He'd have to perform such functions as polishing his belt buckle "to the extent that you had to. In that respect AFRS was a peculiar beast and you couldn't 'Sir' everybody because that was not the way it worked."(17)

Officers in charge of the decommercializing unit were

responsible for supervising the work. "We knew far more about this than they did and I don't think they ever overruled us on anything," recalled Hewitt. Protocol never entered into the daily life of the headquarters. "We were discreetly on a first-name basis with all the officers."

Despite his failure to be sent overseas, Alan Hewitt acknowledged the contribution which he and his fellow broadcasters made to the war effort. "We had proof of it in the mail that we got from overseas. We had pitches on lots of shows for requests from the soldiers on what they wanted to hear. We had tremendous mail every week, tremendous. In those letters, we'd get firsthand feedback from people telling us what a good job we were doing and how important AFRS was to them."(20)

Unlike some of his more enthusiastic colleagues, Schwartz had a more realistic view of the contribution his AFRS career had on the war effort. Even considering his agent's plea to write a play about AFRS once he'd returned to civilian life, Schwartz said he didn't think the postwar generation would "find the efforts of people such as we were, dramatically important in the war." Rather than helping to win the conflict, AFRS was simply "doing a job to help the people who were winning the war. In that sense, we were helping. Certainly, we weren't [ourselves] winning the war."(21)

Schwartz finally convinced "Command Performance" producer Bob Welch, who did want to write the play about AFRS, that there had been no drama in their work. No one had gotten shot. No bombs had gone off. No one had died on Santa Monica Boulevard putting out their programs. "Whether we write a better or worse joke for a 'Command Performance' or whether Bob Hope does it or some lesser known person does it, is not earth shaking. It's not going to shake people or upset them. No play can be written where nothing is at stake."(22)

Actor Howard Duff, who had a better view than most of the actual contribution which AFRS made to the war effort, agrees with Schwartz. After spending two years in an infantry unit, he arrived at the Hollywood office in 1943. He worked in the decommercializing unit and did some producing, and then went to the Pacific as an AFRS correspondent. From there, he went to Iwo Jima where he started the island's radio station.

While acknowledging the success of AFRS in producing so many programs every week, Duff observed, "God knows, we didn't win any engagements. I don't know that we thought we were ever doing anything important. We thought we were doing something useful. At least I did. I don't think we were moving any worlds. Heck, no."(23)

The information mission of AFRS, which Generals Marshall and Osborn considered as its primary role, at times may have seemed secondary to its entertainment

function. The entertainment side surely wouldn't win the war. As Duff points out, "there was nothing for guys to do in many areas, those who were not actually fighting, except to hang around and listen to the radio. From that standpoint, I guess we helped them."(24)

Early AFRS was simply a composition of broadcasting professionals doing what they did best. They were sincere. They were soldiers. They worked hard and long. They were where they belonged.

Ask any soldier whom they touched with their "little bit of home," and the reply is quickly forthcoming.

"Man, they sure helped."

Now, it was time to expand.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 9

(1) Symposium, July 13, 1983.

(2) Interview with Jerry Lee, September 30, 1982;  
Interview with Alan Hewitt, January 2, 1983.

(3) Interview with Jerry Hausner, July 2, 1983.

(4) Hewitt Interview.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Interview with Lloyd Shearer, July 7, 1983.

(7) Interview with Sherwood Schwartz, August 1, 1983.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Ibid; Hausner Interview.

(10) Ibid.

(11) Schwartz Interview.

(12) Ibid.

(13) Interview with Lester Linsk, June 27, 1983;  
Hausner interview.

(14) Schwartz Interview.

(15) Ibid.

(16) Ibid.

(17) Linsk Interview.

(18) Hewitt Interview.

(19) Shearer Interview.

(20) Hewitt Interview.

(21) Schwartz Interview.

(22) Ibid.

(23) Interview with Howard Duff, June 27, 1983.

(24) Ibid.

# INTER-ALLIED BROADCASTING

If Tom Lewis and AFRS were going to fulfill their mission, they'd have to broadcast to as large an audience of defense personnel as possible. To get that done, AFRS networks and stations had to be established operations by full-time military broadcasters to reach the troops as they moved to the theaters of operation.

## THE ARMED FORCES NETWORK (AFN)

The European operation became known as the American Forces Network (AFN). It began with Tom Lewis's trip to Alaska in June, 1942, with Murray Brophy of the War Department's Office of Coordinator of Information. The visit proved to Lewis the great advantage which local radio stations offered over shortwave in the delivery of the AFRS package.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) provided programs in a language that the American troops could understand. Yet, to the average American serviceman used to the high-powered, star-laden, commercial programs back home, the BBC fare paled in impact. The BBC owned and operated all the radio stations throughout the British Isles. Their limited variety of programming leaned to the heavy classical type of music, drama and literature. There was an almost complete absence of American news, sports and entertainers, and the troops had to contend with the British accents.

The British military accepted the value of providing armed forces radio to its troops. The BBC launched its "Forces Programme" on February 1, 1940. They directed their radio service initially to the British soldiers in France. After Dunkirk, they focused programming on troops garrisoned throughout Great Britain. Finally, the military broadcast became an alternative to the regular BBC schedule not only for the armed forces, but also to the civilian population.

Meanwhile, Lewis and Brophy reached an informal arrangement on how to provide American radio to U.S. troops in Great Britain. As a representative of the COI, Brophy promised to negotiate an agreement with British authorities. He'd supply low-powered transmitters, temporary personnel, and arrange for connecting landlines. In turn, Lewis agreed to take over the operation, man it and maintain it, once AFRS had begun to function and could operate overseas facilities.(1)

During a trip to England late in the summer, Brophy met with General George Marshall and discussed the

need to establish an American radio outlet. He emphasized the value of providing American news and entertainment while creating a medium for the Theater Commanding General to communicate with his troops. Since Marshall had been instrumental in establishing AFRS, he supported Brophy's effort. However, the BBC controlled the airwaves. If he was to reach an agreement, Brophy faced more of a diplomatic problem than a military one.(2)

Brophy followed-up his request of Marshall, and sent Brewster Morgan, the organization's Chief of Broadcasting, to England. There, Morgan would prepare a report. He delivered it to General Eisenhower on November 1, 1942. A few days later, Morgan received a call from General E. S. Hughes, the European Theater Deputy Chief of Staff, to come to his office. Hughes told Morgan that the Theater Commander would approve the creation of an American radio network on an experimental basis. They agreed that twelve transmitters would be sufficient for the experiment.(3) Overseas broadcasting was on its way.

The OWI then got an agreement from the BBC. They'd allow the Americans to set up a network "as an additional BBC service." Once the BBC approved the operation, it provided the OWI with facilities. At the same time, the BBC imposed its own program material restrictions on the American broadcasts. These included censorship of questionable lyrics and writings and compliance with British copyright regulations.

With the OWI-BBC agreement in hand, the American Command formally approved the creation of the American Forces Network (AFN) on March 15, 1943. It designated the OWI as the agent to negotiate with the Wireless Telegraphy Board – the British counterpart of the Federal Communications Commission. OWI would work out the details of the agreement. Since British law gave the BBC a monopoly for radio broadcasting, Morgan and Guy Della Cioppa, another OWI employee, had to obtain a waiver to operate. They then received a license from the Wireless Telegraphy Board to establish a broadcasting network of 50-watt transmitters operating on two assigned frequencies.(4)

Morgan and Della Cioppa immediately procured the original equipment for the stations and secured operating agreements between the OWI, the U.S. Army, and the BBC. The OWI ordered twenty-eight of the 50-watt transmitters from the TWT Company in Los Angeles. After AFRS assumed control of the operation, it acquired twenty-five more transmitters from the same company. They borrowed studio equipment and telephone landlines from the BBC.

To install the transmitters and related equipment, the OWI turned to the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Captain

Lloyd Sigmon, who had worked at station KMPC in Los Angeles, had received a direct commission into the Signal Corps. He received orders in late Spring to prepare for an overseas assignment. He was to have sixteen radio engineers under his command. Soon he was in England, but he had not yet received orders detailing how the project was to be accomplished, and he found his men were scattered throughout England doing other work.<sup>(5)</sup>

Eventually, the OWI tracked down Sigmon, located his men, and directed him to put the first four AFN stations on-the-air by July 4. As Sigmon recalls, the assignment "was ready to do" because the transmitters, made in the United States, came with a complete package. Each included the 50-watt transmitter, the antennas, and other equipment. His most difficult task was to find locations on each base to install the equipment.<sup>(6)</sup>

Since the BBC didn't want the AFN programs to compete with its own audience in London, no station could be installed in or near England's largest city. The closest an AFN transmitter could be located was Oxford. To provide radio service to American servicemen stationed in London, Sigmon's engineers built an elaborate sound system similar to that used by the Musak Company. This included public address systems in buildings used by the American military, which they connected to AFN Headquarters by landline. The remote transmitters they initially sited were almost exclusively on Air Force bases. In the months before the Normandy invasion, they got transmitters installed in the Army assembly areas. According to Sigmon, the stations were very simple. Despite the low power that theoretically would only reach to the perimeters of the bases, the signal sometimes reached into British homes. During the summer, Sigmon recalls, "American programs could be heard through the open windows."<sup>(7)</sup>

While the technical work was underway, Morgan drew up detailed plans for an organization that called for OWI personnel to be in charge of the facilities. Army personnel provided the programming.

AFRS created a Board of Directors on June 25, 1943 to supervise the operation. Included were the (Theater) Chief of Special Services and the Special Services Radio Officer, the Chief of Public Relations and the Public Relations Press Officer, the Chief Signal Corps Officer and the Chief of Administration. From the OWI came the Chief Engineer and Chief of Broadcasting Europe.

The Program Committee members included the Theater Public Relations Radio Officer and the Special Services Radio Officer, the OWI Chief of Broadcasting in Europe and a BBC Program Representative. Morgan selected Lieutenant Colonel Charles Gurney to be the Theater Radio Officer. In this capacity Gurney became the first chief of AFN. Captain John Hayes became his

assistant. By May, 1943, they had assembled a staff of four officers and thirteen enlisted men.

Gurney and Hayes adopted their operating philosophy from Murray Brophy's conversations with Eisenhower. These meetings had led the General to approve the creation of AFN in the first place. Captain Hayes later recalled that AFN had received a mandate "to supply American military personnel in Europe with a radio programming service for the information, education and entertainment of such personnel." The radio service itself was to "be as much a duplication of American broadcasting at home as it was possible to achieve overseas."<sup>(8)</sup>

AFN would be functioning in a war zone. That became an immediate problem in carrying out Eisenhower's directive. As the network was being put together, John Hayes spent considerable time discussing the problem of censorship. He involved the OWI, the BBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the U. S. military services. Finally, he reached a consensus with Eisenhower's staff. The only censorship would be in the area of military security. There would be no other censorship "except the self-disciplines exercised by our various program directors concerning taste, tact and the sensibilities of our Allies. The normal restraints of the American system of free broadcasting will also be adopted."<sup>(9)</sup>

To fill the broadcast schedule, AFN secured program material from the major networks and from local stations across the United States. Some musical entertainment came from the BBC, particularly the BBC Symphony. In addition, AFN secured program material produced in England from local commands and at its own headquarters. AFN had its own news department which got its material from the major wire services and what its staff gathered in the field. Finally, AFN broadcast "informational programming designed to sustain the combat morale of our military services and to supply such personnel with orientation about the nature of the enemy, the necessity for victory, etc. All were prepared by the military program staff at the central headquarters of the American Forces Network."<sup>(10)</sup>

All the entertainment programming from the United States was to bear the AFRS signature. Likewise, a considerable portion of the information and education material, which the Army produced in Washington, arrived via AFRS. AFN did identify Armed Forces Radio as the primary source of programming. In some cases, announcers eliminated some of the references to AFRS in order to establish the network's own identity. Ultimately, this policy led AFN to become a virtually autonomous operation. Except for overall AFRS, and later AFRTS, policy and the use of broadcast materials from AFRTS, the network remained under the direct control of the

**United States Command in Europe until the formation of the Army Broadcasting Service in 1980.**

AFN shared with AFRS, the mission of supplying the troops with entertainment, information and news. It also shared the goal of obtaining credibility by insuring an unfettered news operation within the limits of security.

Hayes recalls the conclusions to formulating AFN news policies. "For the American Forces Network to have credibility among the listening audience, no material would be rebroadcast from OWI sources. Neither would they use any material prepared by OWI or by the Psychological Branches of the military or civilian authorities. It seemed quite basic that the AFN should confine itself solely to programming for American military and civilian-attached personnel. If any material broadcast was heard by either ally or enemy, this fact should have no basic consideration in the Network programming."

To Hayes, it became a decision of "cardinal faith that American personnel in the European Theater should never be subjected to any broadcast heard over AFN that might be construed as propaganda. No commentary, news analysis or hard news would be prepared by anyone other than personnel of the American Forces Network. Any other action would have led to the conclusion by the audience that the American Forces Network was being used as a propaganda arm of the Government."(11)

The implementation of these policies began on July 4, 1943, when the Network launched its broadcast day with "The Star Spangled Banner." They located the first AFN studios at 11 Carlos Place in London. By early 1944, the network had increased its schedule to eighty-seven hours a week with about thirty hours coming from AFRS. They allotted seven and one-half hours to news and the rest to locally-produced and BBC programs.

AFRS' Tom Lewis arrived to supervise preparations for American broadcasting to the troops following D-Day. By that time, John Hayes had succeeded Colonel Gurney as OIC of AFN and the headquarters was in the process of moving to 80 Portland Place.

#### **TOP BRASS GET INVOLVED**

After the allied invasion, Lewis set about to arrange for AFN broadcasts to the troops. He immediately found himself in the center of a controversy raging at Supreme Headquarters. British and American planners differed radically on the way radio programming should be sent to the troops. Like Boardman in Alaska, Lewis soon discovered that orders from General Osborne (the "civilian general") didn't carry much weight in the theater of operations. As a "reputed communications expert" and the commandant of the American radio operation, Lewis believed that the British position of maintaining a

**separate broadcast operation for each nation's military** was correct. However, he came into immediate conflict with General Ray Barker, General Eisenhower's Communications Officer. Barker was the author of a plan to combine the separate British, American and Canadian operations into an Allied Expeditionary Forces Radio Program.

According to Lewis, General Barker "believed he'd created something new in a field so new to him, and he held to it despite all opposition." Lewis felt he was "deadlocked in opposition to General Barker because Barker had access to General Eisenhower's ear."

For several weeks, Lewis found himself "blocked and frustrated" by Barker who he felt, "didn't know what the American Armed Forces Radio Service was all about. It was designed to keep American soldiers and sailors in touch with the sounds and news of home – by means of free, undoctored public communications. By changing the whole concept into a joint British-American mish-mash, he negated everything we'd accomplished so far. I searched my soul for a way to help him understand what mischief his stubbornness could bring to pass."(14)

Lewis introduced a plan of action for AFRS following D-Day. Accompanied by Arthur Page, a civilian consultant to Secretary of War Stimson, he took it to the General. The plan, dated May 20, 1944, called for AFN to use one of the high-powered BBC transmitters on the Channel coast to broadcast to the American troops. The BBC would use the second transmitter for its "General Forces Programme." AFN would man mobile stations attached to each of the advancing American armies. Fixed stations would be installed in France as soon as practicable.(15)

Barker read the proposal. Lewis explained that it would require the General's endorsement and General Eisenhower's signature.

After reading it a second time, Barker responded. "This is, I take it, a complete reversal of the plan of operation I've told you I'm in favor of for radio on D-Day plus."

Lewis responded, "It's a restatement of the plan I outlined to you, Sir, the one upon which the AFRS was founded. It's a plan which I and others competent to judge, believe to be correct. I cannot endorse a plan which my professional judgment tells me is a mistake. It is submitted for General Eisenhower's signature, only, of course, upon your approval, Sir."(16)

Barker's anger was vivid. "I do not approve! Colonel Lewis, career Army men like myself sometimes wonder why it was necessary to give such rank to civilian specialists like yourself when men older than you have worked their entire lives for such rank."

Lewis tried to explain his theory of military rank – about which of course he knew little. Barker vehemently

broke in. "I understand the theory, Colonel Lewis. Now, you understand this. Only one thing wins wars, Colonel, leadership! Not radio leadership, not Madison Avenue leadership, not Hollywood leadership. Military leadership! General Pershing did not need radio speakers in the First World War. Remember that!"

Lewis launched into a statement of his and General Osborne's prejudicial view that radio was important to the success of the war effort. Radio had not existed during World War I, he noted. The issues in that war were comparatively simple. His radio unit and Frank Capra's film unit were trying to tell the United States Armed Forces why they were fighting, who was leading them, the nature of their enemies and the nature of their allies. Their campaign strived "to bring General Eisenhower close to the thousands of men of different nationalities that he now commands." It was a very successful campaign. It brought the Supreme Commander into intimate contact with his men, all his men in the coming invasion, not just his American men.

"Now they know him, they admire him. Among themselves, they call him 'Ike.' He's with them, General, not apart from them. He understands them. He respects and admires their individual nationalistic differences and shares with them our common goals in this war. That's what I'm trying to preserve in this directive. That's what the British themselves are trying to tell us."(17)

It was a well expressed argument. Barker, however, was not impressed. He'd send General Osborne a letter of commendation for Lewis' efforts. Colonel Lewis could deliver it in person, thereby removing him from the events that were about to take place along the French Coast.

Lewis persisted. "Nothing I can say will change your mind about the radio operation, Sir?" Barker didn't answer. Although the general called Lewis as he was about to board his plane at Prestwich, he'd not changed his mind, knowing that the invasion was about to take place.(18)

Lewis fully understood the monopoly which the BBC had on broadcasting in the British Isles. During his stay in England, he "had intensive contact and conversation with the BBC from the Director on down." They agreed that each service should have its own radio operation. However, as Lewis later admitted, he was "too little aware of the decision making process" within Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF). If he'd been privy to General Eisenhower's intentions, he might have saved himself the time he spent trying to maintain separate radio services following D-Day, June 6, 1944.

Eisenhower placed priority on integrating the British,

Canadian and American forces under his command. On May 19, 1944, General Barker met with the Minister of Information William Haley, the new Director General of the BBC Brendan Bracken (Barker's counterpart), Brigadier Bosville and American Colonel Edward Kirby. Kirby had just flown in from Washington.

Initially, the discussion centered on securing the release of the BBC transmitter at Start Point, which the combined radio service was to use unencumbered with the BBC policy of program control.(19)

Director-General Bracken informed the group, "The BBC Board of Governors are unanimous that such an allied radio service is impractical. Barker reacted in much the same way he had with Lewis, violent and angry. Eisenhower and his staff had already approved the plan for a unified operation. The meeting here was only to negotiate the terms of a lease for a transmitter, not to debate the plan. The Supreme Commander saw radio as the instrument for reaching all his troops simultaneously, something that couldn't happen if each service had its own broadcast operation.(20)

Bracken told Barker, "You Americans are too sentimentally persuaded. How can we meet the interests and tastes of two different armies with only one service?

"Let's be practical. For example, you have that fellow Bob Hope, very funny to your people, not funny to ours. Now, we have a fellow named Tommy Trindler [a leading British comic]. I doubt if your people can understand what he is saying, much less laugh at him."

He then reiterated that the BBC Board had never had such "unanimity" on the question. It remained quite "adamant" on the subject.(21)

Barker was not about to accept this as the final word. He told Bracken, "I believe it vital, not only to the winning of this war, but to the welfare of our two peoples to bring them together in bonds of understanding and friendship. Through this Allied radio service, we have the means at hand to lay the foundation. I cannot in good conscience accept the decision of the BBC Board and will so report to General Eisenhower. I shall ask for reconsideration—on the highest level, if necessary."(22)

#### DECISIONS FROM THE TOP: EISENHOWER CONFRONTS CHURCHILL

In turn, Eisenhower wrote to Churchill making a formal request that the BBC accept the plan for a combined broadcast operation. Churchill wrote to Bracken, giving him two choices: the BBC could undertake the combined operation or give SHAEF the transmitters so that it could establish the joint program service. On the 23rd, Churchill advised Eisenhower that while the BBC still considered the unified broadcast service impractical,

the Board of Governors would be reconvening to consider it. Barker could expect an answer promptly.(23)

Churchill wasn't going to change the BBC mandate through an act of Parliament during wartime, but he did have leverage as Commander-in-Chief of the British war effort. As a result, the BBC gave in. Military experience had won out over civilian opinion.

At the meeting that followed, Minister of Information Haley promptly defined the conditions under which the BBC would accede to General Eisenhower's desire for a combined radio operation. During the wartime crisis, Eisenhower's wishes and policies would "remain paramount at all times as relayed through his radio liaison officer." In the combined operation, the BBC would provide the world news while the cost of the program operation would be shared equally.(24)

On May 24, Haley informed General Barker that he had appointed Maurice Gorham, a long-time BBC executive, as Director of the new BBC service. By then, Kirby had become director of SHAEF Broadcasting Services. In a note to Barker, Haley wrote that Kirby and Gorham "have worked together in the past and, therefore, already know each other." Haley also pledged that since the BBC "has undertaken this service, you may rest assured that every effort we can put forward to ensure its success will be made."(25)

Gorham received his assignment the day after he'd visited Lewis. He'd heard Lewis recount his efforts to change Barker's position. He still maintained that AFN could better cater to the American troops.

Gorham reviewed the file of correspondence between SHAEF and the BBC, which he'd received from Haley. He discovered that the service was supposed to begin on D-Day. He found his to be "a large order" because no one knew when D-Day would take place. Gorham also found that the BBC had requested some staff from SHAEF and submitted a list of people, but no one had arrived.

The BBC had already given Gorham the transmitter at Start Point, an assigned frequency and a diagram of the area the transmitter would reach in France. The map turned out to be a good outline of the actual D-Day invasion area. It explained the unusual secrecy of the whole project.(26)

Gorham started his organization with no offices, no studios and no plans, although the BBC expeditiously gave him facilities in their Broadcasting House on Portland Place. Establishing the program side proved more difficult. According to the agreement, he could call on the BBC and AFN to supply programming. To get started, he called a meeting with Kirby, John Hayes, Robert Light (also from AFN), the BBC Controller of the General Forces Programme and Gerry Wilmot of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The group began

laying out a seventeen-hour daily broadcast schedule.(27) Quickly, a problem developed.

### INTER-ALLIED BROADCASTING: THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCES PROGRAMME (AEFP)

Gorham informed the Americans that the radio service would be known as the "Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme of the BBC." Although he explained that BBC had stipulated that title, Colonel Kirby and other SHAEF Officers continued to object during the planning phase of the AEFP. When the agreement between SHAEF and the BBC seemed to start unraveling, General Barker met with Kirby, Haley and Gorham to resolve the problem on May 29. According to Gorham, Haley "gave a wonderful display of tough negotiation." The BBC prevailed, although the phrase "of the BBC" would become both an irritant and a source of confusion to the American Soldiers. The only change was that the AEFP was to begin the day after D-Day.(28)

Besides the transmitter, the BBC provided Gorham with technical facilities and office accommodations. AFN provided a portion of the staff and about half of the programming. The BBC supplied 45% and the Canadian military radio operation about 5%.

Despite the short time to prepare, the AEFP was ready to go on the air by June 7 (the day after D-Day). The opening announcement set forth the mission that would guide the operation throughout its existence:

"We are initiating today a radio broadcasting service for the members of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. We shall call this service the AEF Program. It is to be a service especially prepared for you and we shall try to make it of a character suited to your needs. Its purpose is threefold: To link you with your homes by news broadcasts from the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States; to give you the latest news from the war fronts and the world events; and finally, to offer you diversion and relaxation during those precious few moments of leisure from the main job at hand. For this latter purpose, we shall bring you the best entertainment that can be summoned from our Allied nations. The BBC has given generously its resources and skilled personnel. The American Forces Network and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation are working closely with the BBC in this project, making it a truly inter-Allied effort. As we go forward together to victory, the AEF program will be constantly within your reach, serving you, we hope, in a manner worthy of your deeds."

Despite creation of the AEFP, the American AFN retained its network in England. It continued to provide the complete AFRS package to U. S. airbases and to the American soldiers at their staging areas. Once the

advance began across Europe, AFN would provide mobile radio stations to accompany U. S. troops with entertainment, news and sports.

In the end, AFRS managed to provide service to American fighting men in the same way as Lewis had tried to sell to General Barker. However, or most of the men fighting on the continent, the AEFP, with AFRS support, became a primary source of entertainment.

Even considering the complexities of international leadership, Lewis' people remained steadfast in their efforts to provide "a little bit of home" for the Americans.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 10

- (1) Savage, *Progress Report*.
- (2) Colonel Theo Arter to Commanding General, ETOUSA, March 12, 1943.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Interview with Lloyd Sigmon on July 3, 1983.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.

- (8) John Hayes, President, Washington Post Broadcasting, to John Seigenthaler, Editor, *The Nashville Tennessean*, November 22, 1963.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Hayes to Seigenthaler, *op.cit.*
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Proposed Plan for Radio coverage for Forthcoming Military Operation, European Theatre of Operations, May 20, 1944.
- (14) Lewis, Unpublished Autobiography.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) *Star-Spangled Radio*, p. 137.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) Ibid.
- (21) Ibid p 139; Maurice Gorham, *Sound and Fury*, p 140.
- (22) *Star-Spangled Radio*, pp 140-41.
- (23) Ibid, p 142.
- (24) Gorham, pp 140-41.
- (25) Ibid pp 143-44; *Star-Spangled Radio*, pp 142-43.
- (26) Gorham, p 144.

## ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCES BROADCASTING

The Allied Expeditionary Forces Program had access to the best of radio entertainment from Britain, Canada and the United States. BBC Director Maurice Gorham spent considerable time trying to keep the right balance between the three nationalities. "There was little finesse about these meetings of ours," he recalls, "and everybody emerged rather battered." Ultimately, the U. S. American Forces Network provided about fifty percent of the programming with the other half coming from the BBC and the CBC.(1)

Initially, AEFP had to rely on materials coming from each of the broadcast services. Gorham wanted to carry out General Eisenhower's goal of a unified service. So, he "was very keen on having some joint programs where British and American voices broadcasted together, instead of each having a program in turn." From the beginning, the news side of the operation did just that. As agreed between SHAEF and the BBC, the news on the AEFP came from BBC news facilities. Announcers from AFN, BBC and CBC read the news from all three countries throughout the broadcast day, alternating every hour on the hour from 5:55 AM until 11:00 PM. Announcers from all three nations also did the informational spots.(2)

### FIRST JOINT PROGRAMMING

An effort to provide more in-depth coverage of military developments led to the first joint programming. On July 4, AEFP celebrated the American's Independence Day with a special two-way program. Staff members British Lieutenant Colonel David Niven and U.S. Captain Franklin Engelmann interviewed British, American and Canadian troops at Normandy as part of a composite program. It included a direct shortwave broadcast from the United States. This was a one-time event, however.

On a regular basis, the most successful AEFP original program was "Combat Diary," a daily round-up of war news. "Combat Diary" provided first-hand accounts of events in the local theater and the other fronts. Occasionally, they'd spotlight a particular unit and its achievements since D-Day. The program ran seven-days-a-week from July 3, 1944, until after V-E Day (May 8, 1945). Captain Jack London of AFN handled most of the narration and Captain Royston Morley, a former BBC producer and war correspondent, edited the program

during its entire run. A changing team of American and Canadian uniformed radio men assisted them. Stories were contributed by war correspondents and fighting men from all three countries. Edited "by soldiers for soldiers," the program had great popularity among the troops as they moved across Europe.

"Combat Diary" also attracted the attention of other reporters who listened to the program and began contributing to it. To Maurice Gorham, the best part of the program was having one nationality reporting on another – a BBC man covering Patton's Army or an American writing on the British air war. "Combat Diary" also brought to many of the correspondents the new experience of having their reports heard by the men about whom they were writing. This "particularly impressed the American reporters, who were used to sending cables to their home newspapers or speaking over the radio-telephone to New York. They now found their pieces being broadcast within a few hours to the very units whose actions they'd described and amongst whom they were still living."(3)

A memorandum was written on July 6, 1944, to AFN Commander John Hayes from Major Arthur Goodfriend, Chief of the Orientation Branch of the U. S. Command and later Officer-in-Charge of *Stars and Stripes*. It captures the initial impact of the AEFP operation on the troops in the field. Goodfriend arrived in Normandy shortly after the initial landings on the second day of a four-day storm that was interfering with the unloading of ammunition and supplies. Rain was coming down in sheets. The wind was blowing at more than forty miles per hour. It was "about as dismal a scene as I ever recall, and I've seen such things as the Quetta earthquake in India and Monsoons in the Indian Ocean. With all that rain coming everywhere, cooks had a hard time preparing food. When they did, the water poured onto the plates, and the enlisted men huddled around vehicles in the near vicinity, in a vain attempt to find protection."

Other than the cook shack, Goodfriend found only one other shelter. It was a piece of canvas protecting "something exceptionally precious, something which even under the circumstances had to be kept dry." As the men began to eat, the sound of music came out of the crude shelter.

"It was strange music. It was jive – American jive! I never did find out whose jive it was, but it was gay, rhythmic, and in no time at all it had us feeling 100-percent better. The wind and the rain got all mixed up with the music. It distorted it a little, but in the main the reception was good. Wonder of wonders, it was hooked to a loudspeaker that gave it the volume it needed to compete with the noises of the beach. We could hear it clearly where we sat. All around us we could see others

pricking up their ears and smiling as they ate and listened to the music of that radio."

"We forgot the rain. We forgot our rations. We forgot our soaked clothes. We forgot about the destruction and dislocation on the beach. We felt revived and confident. If Americans could listen to music in those terrible conditions, things could not be so bad." As the programming continued during the afternoon and soldiers passed into the range of the loud-speaker, Goodfriend observed he could see "their shoulders straighten and their faces relax. It made the whole job easier."

In warranted exaggeration, Goodfriend wrote that this was "the day when the Army beat both the Germans and the elements. The radio and the cheer it brought to the boys on the beach played a big role in that victory." He felt "proud when the brief announcement identified the music as part of the American Forces Network service over the Allied Expeditionary Forces Program." Armed Forces Radio was achieving its purpose.

When Tom Lewis read the Goodfield report, he forwarded it to his staff. He told them, "It expresses your objective in more practical and more human terms than anything I've yet read on the subject. It expresses, too, the only promise we ever made to you at AFRS – a sense of fulfillment for the long hours of thought and work you've poured into this operation." (4)

#### GLENN MILLER

Gorham continued to work toward his goal of using the programs from the individual services to supplement the jointly-produced shows. His most successful effort was the regular broadcasts by uniformed bands from each military service. Major Glenn Miller brought an all-star organization from the United States, Captain Robert Farnon conducted the Canadian band and R.S.M. George Melachrino led the British musicians. Leading entertainers like Bing Crosby and Dinah Shore, appeared with the bands in spectacular inter-Allied shows.

Glenn Miller, the most popular band leader of the day, joined the Army shortly after Pearl Harbor and directed a band for the U.S. Air Forces Training Command. On arrival in England, the service officially designated his group the American Band of the Supreme Allied Command. Even though their primary assignment was to broadcast on AEFP, Miller's band made personal appearances at benefits, hospitals and military bases. Besides the major broadcast each Thursday night, small groups from the forty member band played regularly scheduled programs on other evenings. A twenty-piece string section, for example, did a quarter-hour program called "Strings with Wings" on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Despite the excellent reception of his music broadcasts, Miller discussed his views with Gorham. In particular, he

cited the problems Gorham had in dealing with the Americans during his tenure as head of AEFP. Miller didn't know much about the organization. He'd thought he'd be directing his own program instead of merely supplying a band. Gorham admits he compounded the problem by trying to integrate Miller's programs to give them an inter-allied flavor. "We gave him the best soloists Britain had, thinking that it'd appeal to everybody to hear Vera Lynn or Anne Shelton singing with his band. He didn't want them. He had his own formula and found it hard to fit them in." (5)

Time helped Miller and Gorham understand each other better. Gorham agreed with Miller's scheme of transcribing his radio broadcasts, which he'd been doing for his weekly shows. This gave him more time to appear at bases throughout the British Isles. It provided backup if lines weren't available for live broadcasts. Gorham's influence within SHAEF helped Miller travel to Paris to do live broadcasts from the French capital.

Eisenhower's headquarters initially turned down Miller's request to go to Paris, citing the difficulty of securing landlines to carry the program back to England. When he finally got the arrangements, Gorham told Miller, "Now, Glenn, there's only one more thing. For heaven's sake, make sure that boat they put you on is seaworthy. We don't want to lose you all!"

In response, Miller told the AEFP director, "You don't have to worry. You'll have the recordings anyway!" (6) That quip would prove prophetic.

Miller's band flew safely to Paris where they prepared for a live Christmas show. Miller himself hitched a ride with an American Colonel aboard a single-engine plane.

It vanished at sea.

America was staggered by the news and the continuing mystery surrounding the death of the revered bandleader. For AEFP, it produced a crisis of another kind. Gorham knew Miller was missing, but he couldn't report it in Europe until SHAEF made the announcement. What about the Christmas show?

AEFP continued to use Miller's programs transcribed with his voice until SHAEF reported the news on Christmas Eve. Finally, they made the announcement. Having secured lines from Paris, AEFP broadcast the Christmas Program live as scheduled with Miller's deputy leading the band. Gorham saw Miller's loss as a "tremendous blow to the American troops. It was sad news for me too, for after our early clashes we'd got on good terms. I respected his workmanship and the tremendous trouble he took to get his results." (7)

Miller wasn't the only American who had difficulty understanding the AEFP operation. According to Gorham, he was "never sure whether Ed Kirby quite realized that SHAEF had abandoned their original plan

and that the BBC was running the program, not he and SHAEF." Kirby was "more interested in formats than in policy. He was only happy when he was in a studio." Gorham considered him "more of a sponsor than a military adviser. Like so many sponsors he had no idea how to judge a script. He worked entirely on 'dry runs.'" To keep Kirby happy, Gorham obtained as many recording disks as Kirby wanted, despite their shortage. "Kirby would just disappear into the studios and cut records happily for hours."(8)

Dealing with AFN was another matter.

In England, AFN continued to function under the control of the American Command known as ETOUSA (European Theatre of Operations U.S. Army). Unlike Eisenhower and SHAEF, ETOUSA didn't want AEFP in the first place. They believed, like AFRS' Tom Lewis, that the American Forces Network could give American troops whatever they needed. ETOUSA believed that the more AEFP sounded like AFN the better. They were not exactly fans of Gorham's operation.

Gorham recalled, "At all times I had to have my eyes very wide open in dealing with AFN."(9)

Gorham had a long friendship with Johnny Hayes, the commander of AFN. Hayes and AFN had all the AFRS programs. While they never allocated any full-time personnel to AEFP, Hayes' group gave Gorham all the programming he could use and then some. Gorham found him "too business-like to be uncooperative." Throughout their move across Europe, American troops in the field had problems with AEFP, too. Just like AFRS' Lewis had feared, when he argued for separate broadcast services, the BBC control of the operation had a negative impact on U. S. troop morale.

#### G.I.'S SPEAK OUT

True Boardman had been on a fact-finding mission for the Chief of Special and Information Services of the U. S. Forces in Europe. When he returned on January 22, 1945, he provided a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the AEFP. In a memorandum for General O.N. Solbert, Boardman emphasized that he did not intend to criticize the personnel of AEFP nor the separate broadcast services. First, AEFP provided "radio of high standard." Second, "the combined operation after D-Day was essential. It placed emphasis in every possible way on the fact that we came to the Continent as one force, one army, with absolute singleness of purpose." In doing this, the "combined radio service was psychologically of great value."

However, times had changed. "That joint operation, as now in effect, provides a program service less than satisfactory to most American listeners. It works against, rather than for, friendly relations with our British Allies."

Boardman related his findings from visits he'd made to the Seventh and Third Army. He included reactions to the AEFP service as a whole, reactions to the AEFP news service and reactions to reception. Overall, the average G.I. had an unfavorable impression of AEFP. When asked if he listened to the service, the normal reply was "You mean that BBC deal?"

Soldiers did "not identify the present set-up as part of a world-wide service by the American Army, designed especially for him as an American fighting man. Neither does he have any feeling that the radio he hears is what Army broadcasting is primarily intended to be - that is, a strong and familiar 'tie with home.' He is more inclined to think of the AEFP as 'another Limey propaganda gag.'"

Part of this feeling resulted from that pesty and constant reference to the AEFP as a service "of the BBC." While Boardman acknowledged that the decision to eliminate this reference from the air would help, it was by no means the complete answer. Regardless of how the service described itself, many potential irritants remained. The G.I.s simply had no use for the British soccer reports, nor the British comics whom they neither liked nor could understand. With few exceptions, the American troops thought British popular music was inferior to their own name bands. Boardman concluded, "In short, he doesn't like most British programs as well as he would American shows."

When a soldier was able to listen to Expeditionary Station, he had a wide range of American programming, thanks to local option periods. However, most of the day, AEFP provided no such option. Even with the operation of AFN stations assigned to each of the American armies, thousands of G.I.s still got most or all their radio from the AEFP broadcasts beamed from England. Despite the efforts of AFN to inject American programming into these AEFP broadcasts, Boardman said that AEFP remained "still basically British in spirit. 'It reminds the G.I. listener more of England than of home. Unlike the British soldiers on the Continent, he has no alternative service to listen to. [British soldiers could pick up the General Forces Programme of the British military and the civilian BBC shows.] So, he is inclined to resent it."

Boardman found that the "most consistent and most violent criticism of the AEFP is on the score of news." He outlined several problem areas: First, U.S. soldiers didn't feel they were getting due credit from the BBC for their part in the war. Second, as the Public Information Officers told him, the newscasts mentioned only BBC correspondents. Finally, the G.I.s complained, the BBC placed undue emphasis on British units at the expense of American units, and the greater proportion of the news was British rather than American.

Although the agreement which set up AEFP called for a fifty-fifty news coverage, the troops pointed out that this wasn't fair either. After all, the United States had more troops in Europe than the British. When newscasts mentioned both British and American forces, the British forces were almost always mentioned first. The soldiers with whom Boardman talked, also told of a recent instance where the BBC gave the top news spot to British developments in Greece. That was dumb. Certainly, more important things were going on in other areas. The Battle of the Bulge for one!

Compounding the troops' criticisms was a general dissatisfaction with AEFP's technical side. The signal coming from England often wasn't strong enough for a satisfactory relay over local stations. The Seventh Army troops also complained that their own station had its production operations replaced by the AEFP feed. Letters from the soldiers were unanimous in their preference for the all-American local format in opposition to the relay-type programming.

It was true that Boardman had gathered these soldiers' opinions informally and without scientific research techniques. Yet, he still felt safe in concluding that any more-extensive survey would produce the same results. In any case, in matching the programming effort of the AEFP with the fundamental principles on which AFRS was based, Boardman believed that AEFP just didn't fulfill the mission.

"The news is not consistently American in content nor manner of presentation," he said. "The program schedule is unfamiliar in many respects and use of the medium for orientation and troop information is restricted on the grounds that American orientation material should not be disseminated to British troops."

So, Boardman's recommendation was simple. "Discontinue the AEFP. Extend to the Continent the American Forces Network, as now operated in the United Kingdom. A complete all-British broadcast service to British troops is now available in the General Forces Program of the BBC. No similar all-American program is available to the American troops." The two parallel services should provide their own army its respective radio programming. Such a plan could also provide alternative choices to their own programming if they so wished. Freedom to choose was the key element.

"The undesirable psychological factor in forcing a man to listen to a type of show he doesn't like would be eliminated." Plus, an all-American operation would fulfill the AFRS mission of providing information and orientation materials to American troops on a network basis. Of course, it would also add to the clout of Lewis' and Boardman's organization and it'd redirect broadcasting efforts back to Lewis' original objectives.

Boardman acknowledged the "many complexities involved" in his recommendation. General Eisenhower himself, as Supreme Commander, would have to approve or disapprove his proposal, based on his conclusion that "the original mission of the AEFP is now accomplished.

"For the reasons here indicated, further continuance of the joint service is undesirable. It actually mitigates against the very objectives which inspired its establishment. It engenders Anti-British feelings on the part of American soldiers, and deprives those same soldiers of radio as they prefer to hear it." (10)

### THE AEFP LEGACY

Despite Boardman's recommendations to Solbert, and similar ones to Hayes and AFN the next day, AEFP had not done all that badly. The service had provided news and entertainment to several million soldiers. It contributed to the good morale of the troops during the most difficult periods following initial landings or the occasional military setbacks. Perhaps more important, during times when a lull took place in the fighting, radio was there. Its music, drama and comedy helped the men relax with at least a brief respite from the serious business at hand.

Gorham was "accused of something by somebody at least once a week throughout the lifetime of the AEFP."

One of the easiest criticisms to explain, if hardest to do anything about, was "Radio Arnhem." The Germans would pick up AEFP broadcasts and relay them back to the Allied troops exactly like the mobile stations were doing. The only difference was that the Germans would slip in bits of propaganda. Aided by AEFP's "precise timings," the German station "did it very cleverly indeed. Radio Arnhem's news was often mistaken for ours!" When someone would call up asking why AEFP was saying that Montgomery was a better General than Bradley or Patton, Gorham would have to explain that Arnhem had "done it again!"

Despite such problems, Gorham states, "it was a job worth doing all the same. We all thought it the best entertainment program ever put on the air. Of course it ought to have been, with all the material from three countries that it had to draw upon. It did seem to be a godsend to the troops."

The evidence came, just as it did for the AFRS operations, from the soldiers themselves. From all over the world, first-hand testimonies poured in from the front and from troops when they returned home. Gorham found it surprising how many men "appreciated the idea behind the service and thought better of their allies because of it, thus justifying SHAEF's original idea. We knew that a mention of a unit in our 'Combat Diary' had an amazing effect in raising the unit's morale."

Thus, despite Lewis' concern about the British control of AEFP, the service did accomplish General Eisenhower's aim.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 11

(1) Gorham, pp 146-49.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Gorham, pp 1476-47.

- (4) Major Arthur Goodfriend to John Hayes, July 6, 1944; Lieutenant Colonel Tom Lewis to All Personnel of the AFRS, Military and Civilian, July 20, 1944.
- (5) Gorham, p 152.
- (6) Ibid., pp 151-52.
- (7) Ibid., p 152.
- (8) Ibid., p 147.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Lieutenant Colonel True Boardman to Brigadier General O.N. Solbert, January 22, 1945.

## CHAPTER 12

# THE AMERICAN FORCES NETWORK OVERSEAS

While AEFP broadcast to the Allied troops advancing across Europe, the American Forces Network continued to provide American Forces in the British Isles with full radio service. Johnny Hayes was now a major. To operate the network, he scoured American encampments throughout Great Britain to find engineers, newsmen and announcers who'd worked in commercial radio before entering the military. Volunteers, especially from combat units, were easy to find.

### AFN PROGRAMMING

The AFRTS package from Los Angeles gave the network a solid base of programming. However, from the start, Hayes felt it was important to fill out his broadcast schedule with locally-prepared news and special events programs.

To attain this goal, Hayes "borrowed" G.K. Hodenfield from *Stars and Stripes* to serve as AFN's first Director of News and Special Events. Hodenfield's staff included Ford Kennedy, Marty Smith, Johnry Vrotsos and later Russ Jones and Bob Light.

The British Ministry of Information was more security-conscious than the Americans. They were also more used to strict censorship of news. So, they kept two men on duty in the AFN studios just to monitor the live broadcasts. According to Hodenfield, there was little reason for the effort "since virtually all our news had already been censored before we got it." In any case, for the first six months, the news staff did little more than rewrite this carefully edited material and prepare some "March of Times" style radio documentaries.

In January, 1945, AFN moved its microphones "on location." Hodenfield and announcer Keith Jamieson took a wire recorder to a Royal Canadian Air Force Base north of London. There they would interview members of bomber crews about to take part in a massive 2,000-plane nighttime air strike against Berlin. Leaving Jamieson on the ground, Hodenfield boarded one of the Lancasters and accompanied the mission sitting next to the bombardier. As the armada reached Berlin, it encountered heavy flak. The bomber in front of his plane received a direct hit and exploded. Hodenfield later recalled, "To say I was scared is an understatement. I was absolutely petrified! I couldn't even speak. The anti-

aircraft fire was fierce. I didn't see how we could make it!"(1)

Despite heavy losses on the raid, Hodenfield's plane returned to base. He then joined Jamieson to interview some of the fliers, pieced together the recordings and broadcast the completed program the next day on AFN. The Canadian military broadcast service also carried the show. It was the first AFN special events remote and set the pattern for thousands of other broadcasts that the Network would do over the years.

The staff didn't always have to go on location to bring the war to AFN listeners. When Germany launched its last-ditch rocket attacks on London in June, 1944, the halls would shake and lights would sway from the near misses of the V-1 buzz bombs and later the V-2 ballistic missiles. Somehow, the announcers and engineers gradually grew accustomed to it and went about their jobs. One day, Major Bob Light and Captain Jack London, the Network's Executive and Operations Officers respectively, climbed to the roof of 80 Portland Place. They took recording equipment to capture the sounds of the attack. When they heard a particularly loud buzz bomb chugging along in their direction, the men switched on their recorder and listened, as all Londoners had learned to do, for the cut-off of the rocket motor, which meant that the missile had begun its downward plummet. In this instance, the motor cut off a few seconds after passing Portland Place. The recording, which AFN then broadcast, picked up on the rocket's sound, the silence following engine cut off, and the explosion that rocked the area.(2) Great reporting!

By D-Day, the Network had expanded to include more than sixty 50-watt transmitters, all connected by landline to the studios at 80 Portland Place, next door to the BBC headquarters. Included among the AFN outlets were six transmitters in Northern Ireland fed by cables across the Irish Sea. Again, because of BBC restrictions, AFN couldn't broadcast over the air in the London area. So, AFN sent its programming over landlines into the city's American military facilities. Despite the BBC restrictions on transmitter power and locations, the Network thrived. By the end of its first year of operations, an estimated five million Britons listened to AFN with regularity.(3)

AFN's popularity and recruitment of its staff within the European theater helped to create a feeling of virtual autonomy from AFRS. Ben Hoberman had begun as a disk jockey in AFN headquarters. He recalls that "we were very proud of what we were doing in Europe, and most of it we were doing by ourselves."(4)

According to Bob Light, during the time he was in London, AFRS requested that AFN identify itself as being part of AFRS rather calling itself the American Forces Network. When AFN refused, the War Department

dispatched a representative who negotiated a compromise that mandated that every other station break would include "This is the American Forces Network of the Armed Forces Radio Service." Light notes that while "we gave them that concession, we printed all our programs in the *Stars and Stripes* saying AFN." During his inspection trip in early 1945, True Boardman found the AFN in London "really didn't like the idea of having to be considered part of Armed Forces Radio Service."<sup>(5)</sup>

Tensions remained between AFN and the AEFP. AFN never attached any of its staff to the joint operation on a full-time basis as the BBC had expected. As part of the negotiations to set up AEFP, AFN had agreed to establish no new stations in the British Isles after June 6. On D-Day, however, AFN took the first step in expanding its scope of operations when it inaugurated a seven-hour all-American weekly service, which it short-waved to the China/Burma/India theater. Then in October, disregarding Eisenhower's goals of a single radio voice with which he could reach all his troops simultaneously, AFN Chief Hayes began to establish stations in France under his control. X.O. Bob Light went from London to Paris to put an AFN station on the air.<sup>(6)</sup>

#### AFN IN FRANCE

Broadcasting in Paris began on October 13th with a 50-watt transmitter. The studios were in cramped quarters in the Shell Building just off the Champs Elysees. As Light recalls, although the station was "right in the middle of Paris, if we could be heard three blocks in all directions, we were lucky." After a couple of weeks, he obtained a fifteen-kilowatt transmitter from the French and then moved the station to 19 Avenue Dienna, which had a better equipped studio. That studio also became the center of operations for AFN in France, connected to the other fixed stations by landline and short-wave. However, V-E Day, the main AFN headquarters and news operation remained in London.<sup>(7)</sup>

As with all AFN stations that went on the air in permanent facilities, the AFRS package served as the basic programming for the Paris operation. To fill out the eighteen-hour broadcast day, the station had its own disc jockeys playing records. This included Specialist Fifth Class Grady Edney, a broadcaster from Boston, who originated the popular "Sing by Night," a late night poetry and music show. The station also did live broadcasts with Sergeant Johnny Desmond and the Glenn Miller ensemble "Strings with Wings" from the Red Cross Club. They provided local sports coverage and news of the military advance.

The quality of the AFRS package and the locally-produced shows created a large "shadow audience" of local residents. When AFN-Paris closed down in June,

1946, following the departure of most American troops, French civilians asked the American ambassador to allow the station to continue. For diplomatic reasons, the Army and the State Department put AFN back on the air, with programs brought to Paris by landlines from the new AFN headquarters in Frankfurt. This operation continued until the end of '47 when AFN permanently closed the station.<sup>(8)</sup>

Once the Paris station was operating, Light went into the field. There, he would arrange for mobile stations to accompany the four United States Armies as they advanced across France into Germany. Light had as his model the "station on wheels" that was accompanying the Fifth Army through Italy. The first Allied transmitter on the continent began operations in Naples on October 25, 1943, with the announcement: "This is the American Expeditionary Station – in the field with the Fifth Army."

#### AFN MARCHES ACROSS EUROPE

Initially, the station stayed in Naples. There it gained popularity with the soldiers fighting their way north from the city, with sailors aboard ships in the harbor, and with the Italian population itself. After the fighting had moved north and out of range of the broadcasts, the staff received a letter from a soldier along the Volturno River.

"Are you guys still broadcasting?" it asked. "We haven't heard from you in weeks. We thought you were supposed to be in the field."<sup>(9)</sup>

With that input, the station became truly mobile. The staff obtained two trucks and had special bodies built on them. It obtained two ninety-foot poles from the Signal Corps and headed into the field joining the Fifth Army on February 15, 1945. The new mobile station proudly displayed its jaunty crest consisting of a microphone on wheels, on the side of the van. By April 30, 1944, the station was at Mondrago, located on a small cape jutting into the Mediterranean between Naples and Anzio. Twenty-four hours later they were in direct competition with Axis Sally with a daily 16-hour schedule broadcasting primarily AFRS material, recorded songs and live shows.<sup>(10)</sup>

The only time the station stopped its daily schedule was when it moved to new positions. In July, 1944, Lieutenant Verne Carstensen, the stations' Commander, wrote to AFRS in Los Angeles with the news that the mobile transmitter had travelled five hundred miles since leaving Naples. The first time the staff had used buildings for quarters was when it reached Rome. Less than a week after the capture of the city, broadcasting began.

From his experiences running the station on wheels, Carstensen published a guide to operation practices on April 1, 1945. He emphasized the dominant position of the Field Commander over the functions of an AFRS

station. "The station will cooperate fully in carrying out the desires of the Commanding General, Fifth Army, on matters of administration, programming and hours of operation," he said.(11)

Carstensen provided a list of objectives that he considered essential for the successful operation of a mobile facility: "The staff should always try to make the listener, regardless of his surroundings, imagine that he is listening to the radio back home. The station should broadcast to the primary listener, the soldier in the field. The soldiers should be kept informed with dependable news, and other nonclassified information of the Armed Services, at home and in the world as a whole. The station should orient and educate the soldier by presenting information in a pleasant form. It should give the soldier a better understanding of the war — its causes, reasons for fighting it, results, leaders, and those fighting with and against him. It should work toward building and maintaining morale. Finally, the station should give the soldier a voice. He should be encouraged to display this talent and to offer suggestions."(12)

To provide similar service to the troops fighting across France, Light located 1,000-watt mobile transmitters with the First, Seventh, and Ninth armies by the end of October 1944. Only Patton refused to allow a mobile station to accompany his Third Army across France. At first, the mobile transmitters served "primarily as relay stations for the program schedule of the AEFP." The station was afforded a very limited amount of 'local option' time — just two-and-one-half hours per day — during which it could originate its own programs.(13)

Given the limited space in the stations on wheels, the staffs couldn't carry complete AFRS packages. Most of their programming would have to come from AEFP material. As the mobile stations followed the troops, AFN set up fixed stations to serve the rear encampments and headquarters areas. Locales included Cannes, Nice, Marseilles, Dijon, Le Havre and Biarritz — not at all bad places from which to fight a war. Once in place, the stations joined the AFRS mailing list and began receiving the weekly shipments of transcriptions from Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, the stations on wheels continued to follow the troops as they moved into Germany. On a regular basis, they supplied the soldiers with music and news — sometimes right as it was happening.

#### AFN'S FIRST WARTIME CASUALTY

Such closeness to the fighting was not without its risks. The war found the stations occasionally subjected to bombings and shellings. Sergeant Jim McNally became AFN's first casualty when he was killed in a strafing attack on the Seventh Army's mobile station. Shortly

afterwards, Sergeant Pete Parrish, an AFN news correspondent, was killed while accompanying an airborne unit in France.

Bringing stations close to the action provided the AFN audience with a sense of immediacy to events and a morale boost in knowing that success was at hand. In one instance, Lieutenant General William Hodge stopped by the First Army's 500-watt transmitter and asked, "May I speak over this some time?" He got his chance that night when he returned to announce over the air that Cologne had fallen to the American advance.(14)

#### WAR'S END

Ironically, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the man who wanted a radio operation to communicate to his men, never got to inform them of the most important news of all — victory.

In late April, the war was about to end. Bob Light called Navy Captain Harry Butcher, General Eisenhower's chief aide, and asked that the General provide a statement that AFN could broadcast on V-E Day. About May 1, Light received a transcription, which he described as "awful." It was Eisenhower. He was saying 'Thank you' to the workers of Britain for the wonderful job they did in keeping the factories going — regardless of the bombs and the whole damn thing."(15)

Light immediately called Butcher back and asked "where was a message to the American soldier, for whom the broadcast was intended?"

Butcher responded that Eisenhower didn't have time to provide anything else. Light replied that he'd not play the recording. Butcher asserted that AFN had better.

Light called Kay Sommerville, Eisenhower's driver who was very close to the General. She was "very sympathetic, very sweet, very nice, but couldn't do a damn thing for me."

Thus, when victory was won, AFN didn't carry a word from the Supreme Commander because Light "would not play a 'thank you to the workers of Britain' to our American troops. That'd have been the worst thing in the world. It would have been terrible."(16)

#### AFN ESTABLISHES HEADQUARTERS IN GERMANY

With the fighting ended, AFN established permanent facilities in Germany. From Paris, Light flew to Frankfurt with Ben Hoberman, now a lieutenant working in the Paris station, and with a civilian engineer. The men then drove to Munich and began looking for a transmitter and studios. Light obtained the use of two 100-kilowatt transmitters from the Psychological Warfare Section of the Seventh Army, one in Munich and the other in Stuttgart that the Germans had used to jam allied broadcasts.

during the war. To house the studios, Light requisitioned the mansion of the famed German artist Kaulbach. It'd also been the location where the Nazi Party was born and, during the war, it'd served as the headquarters of the Nazi Gauleiter.(17) With the first station on the air in Munich, Light gave General Patton the station he'd earlier refused to accept. He'd soon wish he hadn't.

To meet a June 10th on-air deadline, Light turned to the Seventh Army and borrowed their mobile station, promising to call the station "AFN, Seventh Army, Munich." When he obtained the temporary facilities, Light decided he'd put the station on the air on the designated date, even though he himself had never appeared on the air. At 5:55 AM on the 10th, Light announced: "This is Major Robert Light, signing AFN, Seventh Army, Munich, on the air for the first time." Completing the introduction, Light turned the station over to the staff and went back to bed.(18)

Unfortunately, in the rush to get the station ready the previous day, Light hadn't paid attention to the rumble of tanks moving into the city! Consequently, he'd not known that the Seventh Army had turned Munich over to Patton's Third Army that had arrived from Bad Tolz. As Light was preparing for his "début" as an announcer the morning of the 10th, Patton had awakened and turned up the volume on his radio searching for a station. Finding only the hiss of a warming transmitter, the general began to shave.

When Light's voice boomed out over the radio, Patton reportedly lost control of his straight-edge razor causing him to cut his neck. To make matters worse, Light had credited the wrong Army for being in Munich! With blood streaming from the wound, Patton ordered his aide to find that announcer and court-martial the "son of a b-tch" who'd misidentified his Army. At 8:00 AM, Light found himself awakened by MP's with orders to arrest him. Only with the aid of a sympathetic police officer, did Light manage to slip out of Munich that night and returned to Paris. He never heard anything more about the incident.(19) On-air fame has its privileges!

AFN-Munich soon moved into its new headquarters at 15 Kolbati Strasse where it remained until February 1942 when it was closed; 47 years of broadcasting in one location! AFN-Stuttgart followed Munich on the air a few weeks later, also with 100,000 watts of power and using the same frequency. In sync, the two stations were able to blanket Western Europe and on occasion even reach the Southeastern United States with AFN programming. AFN-Frankfurt began broadcasting on July 15, 1945, in a requisitioned house on Kaiser Sigmund Strasse, with walls the staff lined with blue-grey Wehrmacht uniform cloth for sound-proofing purposes. In August, AFN put stations on the air in Bremen and Berlin.

#### AEFP CLOSES SHOP

On July 28, AEFP ended operations. Shortly afterwards, General Eisenhower announced the move of SHAEF headquarters from London to Frankfurt. In order to locate where the troops and the Supreme Commander were, AFN Chief Johnny Hayes, by now a Lieutenant Colonel, dispatched Lieutenant Jim Lewis to Frankfurt to look for a building large enough to house the Network's headquarters. When he arrived, Lewis found the Frankfurt station in new facilities on the U.S. Military Compound. The studios were not only too crowded but too close to the military command to suit the non-military radio types who'd be running the operation.

His continued search brought Lewis to Hoeschst, a small, quiet village on the banks of the Main River, a few miles downstream from Frankfurt. There, he found the Hoeschst Castle dominating the skyline as it had since the mid-14th century. Built, and rebuilt, the Castle's most famous guest had been Napoleon, who stopped there during his retreat from Russia in 1812. After many changes of ownership, Count von Bruening had acquired the Castle in 1908. His descendants were not at all happy about losing their home. They were still living there when Lewis requisitioned it for AFN.

The AFN staff began remodeling the Castle. The tower, the oldest part of the structure, became billets for the unmarried staff. A tradition developed that the newest man at the station berthed in the tiny room at the top of the tower, four stories straight up! The renaissance addition became the offices and studios. By August 15, the new facilities were ready and without interrupting programming, operations transferred from downtown Frankfurt to Hoechst.

With the American military operations now centered on Germany, AFN London signed off the air for the last time on December 31, 1945.

But, there were more chapters still to be written in the genesis of Armed Forces Radio.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 12

- (1) Unpublished AFN history, n.d.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid.; Interview with Robert Light, September 28, 1982.
- (4) Interview with Ben Hoberman, April 7, 1983.
- (5) Ibid.; Boardman interview, June 12, 1972, in Larry Dean Miller, "*An historical profile the American Forces Radio and Television Service*," unpublished Masters Thesis, Iowa State University, 1974.
- (6) Light interview.
- (7) Ibid.

- (8) "Newsweek," May 13, 1946.  
(9) "The Army Weekly," n.d., late 1944.  
(10) Ibid.  
(11) Cited in Lieutenant Colonel Russell Fudge, "*The Armed Forces Radio Service*," Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Missouri, 1949.  
(12) Ibid.  
(13) Light interview; True Boardman to John Hayes,  
"Recommendations on Operations of Expeditionary Stations on the Continent," January 23, 1945.  
(14) "Billboard," May 5, 1945.  
(15) Light interview.  
(16) Ibid.  
(17) Light interview.  
(18) Ibid.  
(19) Ibid.

## AFRS BECOMES THE INDUSTRY STANDARD

Even with the makeshift nature of their headquarters, first on the Fox lot and then on Santa Monica Boulevard, Armed Forces Radio operated much like any of the commercial radio networks. Differences did exist, but most favored AFRS.

They undoubtedly had a higher quality staff of writers, producers, directors and entertainers than any network on the private side. As the war progressed, Tom Lewis transferred to his command virtually anyone from the radio field who found himself in the service. AFRS assembled an all-star staff that no network could have afforded – and not without the threat of combat duty.

Through the Hollywood Victory Committee, the staff could request any performer they needed to fill a slot on any program they produced. Transcribing the shows and then editing them down to the right time, enabled the technical staff to produce programs complete and error-free. In Hollywood, that surely wasn't the norm.

Perhaps the most obvious difference was that AFRS didn't concern itself with profit and loss. The shows it produced filled its audience needs and interests, but they weren't necessarily dependent on popularity in the way commercial radio broadcasts were. The staff had more freedom to be creative.

Lewis did have to secure money to run his operation, but he did so from the government itself, not from advertisers. In the early days, he had problems obtaining money and men from the War Department. He was building a new organization from scratch and the officers with whom he was dealing didn't share his appreciation for the value of radio.

Needing funds to get his organization going, Lewis sent Al Scalpone to Washington. Scalpone was originally from Young and Rubicam in New York and was one of the first people to accept an invitation to join the AFRS staff. He'd not yet received his promised commission and Lewis thought that if he went to the Pentagon as a civilian, he wouldn't have to worry about rank. Before answering Lewis' call to come to Los Angeles, Scalpone had served as a consultant to the Joint Army and Navy Welfare Committee - the organization Osborn had headed before accepting his instant generalship and assignment. Scalpone knew who to approach once he arrived in Washington.

He prepared a typical advertising presentation, which included a request for twice the men and money needed. The Colonel who controlled the funds raised the question that Lewis and his staff would face on all his trips to Washington. He asked whether Scalpone knew there was a war going on and told him that the last place he was going to allot money was for a radio operation that he thought was a rather childish thing.

Scalpone lied, telling the Colonel that he was a consultant to the Secretary of War, and that he might just go on down the hall to talk with Stimson. Reacting to the bluff, the Colonel suggested that Scalpone "not be so hasty." He agreed to give AFRS half the money it was requesting – exactly the amount of money Scalpone had in mind. Never mess with a pro.

Scalpone accomplished another feat on his trip East. Stopping in New York, he went to several of the companies who sponsored radio shows and secured programs for AFRS use. When he returned to Los Angeles, Lewis decided that he might be more valuable as a civilian because of the freedom he'd have in dealing with the military.(1)

The military had little understanding of what production of radio shows required. Bob Lee later noted, "Somehow, the military didn't realize that what we had to do was create these programs." Radio needed such creation. While stations had begun to spring up spontaneously, none had enough programs to sustain their operation for any length of time.(2)

The stations that began to appear were "far more than accidents," said Lewis. "The men needed them. They were answering their own need in the field. That helped me more than anything in talking to Congressional Budget Committees. I realized that almost every Congressman and Senator had someone in the Army, some son or daughter. At least he had constituents who were in the military." As a result, Lewis would carefully describe to budget hearings how the men in the field answered their own needs. "They built stations built out of bailing wire and chewing gum," he'd say, in greatly dramatizing the budget requirements.(3) It always worked.

Yet, according to Lee, Lewis was "in a very hot spot between the chaos of creativity that takes place in the building of programs, and the rigid climate of the military." Most of the Army leadership thought of winning the war only in terms of battles. They had a difficult time appreciating the value of radio. Lewis coped with this conflict "very uncomfortably." In going to Washington, he had to plead his case on the intangible grounds that radio would boost the morale of the troops.

Lewis had "to ask people to do things they didn't want to do, or didn't think they wanted to do, or didn't think

they had to do." In Washington, the people he dealt with seemed to think in terms of troops. As long as Lewis had the manpower, AFRS needed nothing else. At the very least, Lewis needed complete cooperation from the War Production Board to obtain the vinylite for the transcriptions.

Lewis, the leader, considered himself a representative of the men in his command and worked to free them "to do their creative work."

The purpose of this effort was to bring service to the civilians in uniform. Lewis noted, "unlike our allies or our enemies, the people we were servicing could now or would one day take part in electing their own Commander-in-Chief. The accent was on the welfare of the enlisted men, always."<sup>(4)</sup>

To exist, Lewis had to learn his way around Washington quickly. He had to be able to pinpoint the people who could help him. This included Governor McNutt, who was head of the War Manpower Commission. He also had to meet with congressional budget committees. Despite his work in advertising, Lewis found that it was difficult for him because he'd not been in such high echelons of government before. Once he learned his way around, the AFRS Chief found he could handle the government bureaucracy and obtain the funding and manpower he needed.

#### PUTTING WASHINGTON'S FUNDS TO WORK

AFRS provided programming for more and more stations around the world. By May, 1944, AFRS was producing 106 shows totalling forty-two hours of broadcasting weekly. Sixty of the programs came from commercial radio, taken off the air and decommercialized.

The AFRS Program section functioned first under the direction of Major Mann Holiner, formerly the radio director on the West Coast for Benton & Bowles ad agency. Another ad agency exec followed him. Austin Peterson, who had worked with Lewis at Young & Rubicam, created the balance of the programs. In peace-time, an ad agency might be content to turn out one or two half-hour programs a week, but AFRS maintained its extraordinary schedule of producing many programs week in and week out.

"Mail Call," AFRS's first original program, went on the air in August, 1942. "Command Performance," however, became the keystone of AFRS programming after Lewis took over its production from the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations in December, 1942. AFRS created these and the other shows from scratch. They conceived, wrote, produced and recorded them just like any commercial radio show. The difference, of course, was that AFRS didn't have to pay for the writers, produc-

ers or directors who were in the Service. More important, they didn't pay for any of the talent.

According to the May 16, 1944, issue of *Daily Variety*, it would've cost close to \$10,000,000 a year for commercial radio to have put the same entertainers on the air. For example, on the Christmas, 1943, 90-minute "Command Performance" special, the list of stars included: Bob Hope, Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Nelson Eddy, Jimmy Durante, Dinah Shore, Ginny Simms, Frances Langford, Kay Kyse and his band and Spike Jones and the City Slickers. In addition, Major Meredith Wilson conducted the AFRS orchestra, composed of leading musicians whom Wilson had brought together for all the live programs.

A more typical, half-hour "Command Performance" offered Hope, Judy Garland, Lana Turner, Durante and Betty Hutton. Although some stars like Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Jimmy Durante, Dinah Shore and Jack Benny seemed to appear on one or another of the AFRS shows at least once a week, the Program Section took care to avoid imposing on the Hollywood stars too often. Three leading talent agents, now in uniform, Lester Linsk, George Rosenberg and Barron Polin, had the task of making the necessary arrangements. According to Sylvester "Pat" Weaver, who later became president of NBC and who arrived at AFRS in 1944, these men "were the nerve center of getting the people, depending on what the idea for the show was."<sup>(5)</sup>

The former agents served as liaison between AFRS and the Hollywood Victory Committee, which acted as the clearing house to provide stars for all wartime activities. Typically, one of the AFRS writers would come up with a skit that called for the performance of a couple of entertainers. He'd ask the talent procurement unit to request the stars from the Victory Committee. If the stars were available, the skit would be fitted into the show on which the writer was working. On the day of the program's transcription, all the entertainers would show up at the studio, rehearse and then record the show before a live audience.

Given the quality and availability of the talent and the skills of the writers, producers and technical people, the original programs which AFRS produced more than matched the level of creativity and appeal found in commercial radio during the war. Weaver as President of NBC considered this period "the zenith of radio" because of the way radio declined once television arrived after the war. The AFRS programs may well stand as the highest expression of American radio.<sup>(6)</sup>

Weaver replaced Bob Welsh as producer of "Command Performance" in early 1945. He observed, "we did 'Command Performance' radio shows that were better than any other radio shows, anywhere, no matter how popular." The program built its reputation on its weekly

half-hour variety format that presented leading entertainers and artists whom the troops in the field had requested. A writer would build an individual show around an idea and the one or two entertainers he chose to feature. When the staff knew that an East Coast celebrity, such as Fred Allen who lived in New York, was coming to Los Angeles, they'd make an effort to create a show around the star.(7)

One typical show had its origins in an appearance of Frank Sinatra in one of his many "Command Performance" scheduled broadcasts. According to Weaver, the writers began to develop ideas around the highly publicized "feud" between Sinatra and Bing Crosby. Like other public relations gimmicks, the press had created the impression that Sinatra and Crosby didn't like each other. Sinatra, the newcomer, was going after the audience of the old, established crooner. To foster this image on the air, Sinatra would make old-man jokes about Crosby who in turn would make "skinny-wind-will-blow-him-away" jokes about the reed-thin younger singer.

For this particular program, the staff brought in Crosby's four young boys to serve as Sinatra's foil. As Weaver recalls, the singer asked the boys what their father was doing. They said he was out in the garden planting. Sinatra asked what he was planting. The answer was the same as last year, "Your phonograph records!" Describing the response, Weaver said, "Now, when an eight-year-old boy says that, you know, the whole place just absolutely collapsed!"(8)

#### **"THE GREATEST RADIO SHOW IN HISTORY"**

While such programs remained the traditional fare, the "Command Performance" specials required considerable planning and preparation. They stand out as radio's finest hour. AFRS produced the 1944 Christmas broadcast in mid-October. Bob Hope acted as master of ceremonies for the two-hour program. The roster of stars included Judy Garland, Dorothy Lamour, Danny Kaye, Spencer Tracy, Frances Langford, Dinah Shore, Jack Benny, Ginny Simms, Fred Allen and Jimmy Durante. Besides the AFRS orchestra, which Meredith Wilson conducted, the program also featured the bands of Spike Jones, Xavier Cugat and Kay Kyser. Secretary of War Stimson, Secretary of the Navy Forrestal and Chief of Staff Marshall provided brief "Seasons Greetings" messages. Bob Welch produced and directed the package and distributed it for broadcast on more than 440 outlets. *Radio Daily* estimated that if commercial radio had produced the program, the talent alone would have cost more than \$150,000.(9)

The *Los Angeles Daily News* called the program "the greatest radio show in history." At the time, it was. In

terms of sheer number of stars, no program might ever have matched it.

AFRS did manage to top it on February 15, 1945, when it created the famous "Dick Tracy Wedding Special." Weaver modestly considers it "one of the greatest shows ever done in radio." As with most "Command Performance" programs, the Dick Tracy Show began with requests from soldiers in the field asking AFRS to transfer Dick Tracy from the comic strip to the airwaves. The program evolved into a two-part special featuring Bing Crosby as "Dick Tracy," Bob Hope as "Flat Top," Frank Sinatra as "Shaky," Dinah Shore as "Tess Trueheart," Frank Morgan as "Vitamin Flintheart," Judy Garland as "Snowflake," Jimmy Durante as "The Mole," the Andrew Sisters as "the Somers Sisters," and Jerry Colonnas as the Chief of Police. What a cast!

Bob Welch produced and helped script the show with several of the AFRS staff writers. Word of the show produced a run on the box office at the KNX studios which had transcribed it. Since most tickets went to men and women in uniform, few people outside the military had the opportunity to see and hear the program. The special was never broadcast in the United States. It would have cost at least \$50,000 in 1945 dollars for the talent alone, if a commercial network had tried to produce it. The show managed to do what Tracy's creator, Chester Gould, didn't do for another four years in his comic strip. His detective hero married his long-time girlfriend after a wedding day interrupted by a bank robbery, a kidnapping and a holdup which killed thirteen people — very typical of the comic strip. Thank goodness they didn't write the honeymoon!

The Christmas Specials, the Dick Tracy Wedding "Command Performance," and the V-E and V-J Day Specials enhanced the AFRS reputation while they entertained the troops.

#### **G.I. JILL**

The regularly scheduled programs, both original and decommercialized programming, remained at the heart of the broadcast operation. "Command Performance," "Mail Call," "Jubilee" and the other programs satisfied a wide variety of tastes. However, it was a quarter-hour daily show, "AEF Jukebox" that had perhaps the largest impact on the soldiers' morale. Strictly speaking, the program operated as a music request show playing the popular records of the day. The disc jockey made the difference.

Martha Wilkerson, known to the soldiers as "GI Jill," combined music with conversation in a way that reminded the troops of their girls back home. Jill was, herself, a young mother with a G.I. husband.

If the letters to Jill provide any indication, the simple

format worked. One Sergeant wrote from the Pacific Theater: "Your cheerful voice does wonders to our morale. Tokyo Rose is also on the air. It's as if two women of enemy countries were battling for men's minds. I'm glad you're winning, Jill." Because her show played at different times of the day, Jill signed off. "Till next jive-time, this is your G.I. gal Jill saying good morning to some of you - good afternoon to some more of you - and to the rest you...good night" in a wistful tone. In turn, one G.I. wrote: "I'm one of the fellows to whom you say 'good night.' Please, won't you shift your supercharger onto the 'good afternoon' just once?"

Martha Wilkerson started her radio career working in a Los Angeles station, doing all sorts of administrative jobs. She was broadcasting overseas for the OWI when Lewis heard her and brought her to AFRS in 1943. She was just 24, America's answer to Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose. Given free rein, Wilkerson worked up her own scripts and developed her audience, playing records, telling jokes, encouraging requests and answering her mail. Routinely, it all required 18-hour days.(10)

Producing and transcribing Jill's and all the other programs were only the first steps in the process of delivering the news, information and entertainment to the troops. Lewis and his staff had decided earlier to send the programs on transcriptions to the individual stations for broadcast. AFRS began to develop and expand its short-wave section with the OWI operation. By September 1, 1943, AFRS was shortwaving one hundred and two hours of programming a week. In September, OWI agreed to give AFRS an allocation of time blocks on the more important broadcast beams. That gave AFRS the opportunity for more programs with an orderly schedule.

#### WORLD-WIDE BROADCASTING

To run the short-wave section, Lewis brought in J. Carter Hermann, who'd been working in OWI as Assistant Chief of its Bureau of Communication Facilities. Besides the headquarters facilities, AFRS had offices and studios in New York and San Francisco that did the actual broadcasting of the programs overseas. From the east coast, the England/Mediterranean beam reached England, North Africa, Italy, Sicily, the Mediterranean, and after D-Day, the continent. The New York facility also provided programming to Central Africa and Greenland. From San Francisco, programs went to Alaska, China, the Southwest Pacific, South Pacific, South and Central America, the Caribbean, and the Antilles.

Although AFRS delivered its programming on disks, the short-wave operation broadcast six hours of its own entertainment productions and decommercialized shows. Short-wave provided news every hour on the hour, special features on international events, general interest

items and small town happenings. AFRS considered the latter programming to be highly important for morale. They broadcast the fifteen-minute program "Hometown Highlights" every day on all beams. They relayed major events either live or re-created by recordings. The men in the field probably listened to the sports programs with most interest.

Besides the play-by-play broadcasts, the short-wave section had special-interest shows. These included "Sports Mail Bag," which answered questions sent in from the men in the field. On one occasion, the program received a letter from New Guinea asking "Sports Mail Bag" to settle a bet. Had Benny Leonard fought Lew Tendler once or twice, the reader asked. A few days later, Leonard himself answered in person on the air!

AFRS paid particular attention to the news, trying to present it as accurately and free from bias as the newscasts aired on commercial radio. The Army News Service gathered the news from the press wire services, wrote the scripts and turned them over to the two short-wave offices for broadcast by enlisted men. The use of a soldier as the announcer gave the men in the field more confidence in what they heard than if a civilian read the copy. Armed forces broadcasting still operates under the same time-proven philosophy.

Perhaps at no time during the war was this confidence needed more than when AFRS announced the death of President Roosevelt on April 12, 1945. AFRS received word that Roosevelt had died at 4:49 EST. AFRS put the bulletin on the air at 5:52 EST when England, Europe and the Mediterranean began receiving shortwave programs. Until 7:00 EST on April 15, AFRS operations proceeded on a restricted schedule with the entertainment programs cancelled. Every short-wave program had a direct relationship either in factual content or in type, to the gravity of the hour. The AFRS office maintained the closest possible liaison with the major network newsroom's and special events departments for the entire period of restricted schedules. Even after the end of limited broadcasts, AFRS continued to monitor the programs of the major networks so that it could keep the troops informed of developments.

During the restricted period, AFRS increased most of the five-minute newscasts to fifteen-minutes. The news carried mostly information about the President's death, amplification of the details of the story, news of the movement of the President's casket and news of the funeral and burial services. In addition, the newscasts provided a wealth of material on the new President, Harry S. Truman.

AFRS aired the first program about President Truman at 7:30 AM EST on April 13. As with all the informational broadcasts, this one drew heavily on material that the

commercial networks had already presented to their domestic audiences. Other programs included the reaction of Hyde Park to Roosevelt's death and reports of the burial from several eyewitnesses. AFRS also broadcast several memorial tributes to the late President. From New York, Bill Stern brought many of the leading figures in sports to the air with their recollections of Roosevelt.

During the funeral services at the White House on April 15, AFRS observed a five-minute period of silence. Raymond Massey followed, reading the address President Roosevelt had planned to give that evening. An announcer described the funeral rites. After the burial at Hyde Park on the 16th, AFRS carried a special Hollywood tribute to the President condensed from a two-hour program one of the commercial networks had aired.

In covering the three days of mourning and ceremony, AFRS fulfilled all the expectations which General Marshall had expressed when he created the radio service.

AFRS had gone well beyond its original conception as a purely Army organization.

#### THE NAVY JOINS AFRS

On October 14, 1944, General Osborn sent a Memorandum to the Chief of Naval Personnel. The Navy had "indicated a desire to participate more fully in the operating and fiscal responsibilities of Armed Forces Radio." His memorandum advised that the War and Navy Departments had authorized full Navy participation in the service.

Osborn further explained that the Army and Navy had reached an agreement on a general cooperation in a conference on September 25, 1944. The meeting established specific policy bases.

Command authority for the combined operation was to remain vested in the Army with the Navy having representatives on the AFRS headquarters' staffs, boards and policy-formulating committees. The Navy was to provide "professionally qualified personnel (Navy, Coast Guard or Marine Corps) in sufficient numbers to sustain its responsibility in the combined operations." The War Department would periodically submit a statement detailing actual expenditures made to carry on the Navy's share of the service. Both the Army and Navy "demands for transcriptions and other technical facilities and services [would] receive fair and equitable attention," according to Osborn. Each service would have their allocation of the resources "continually reviewed and readjusted on the present operational basis." (12)

Lewis completed the formal agreement at a meeting in Los Angeles. It merely authenticated a working arrangement that had been going on for more than a year. By June, 1944, the Navy was operating two radio stations that

used the AFRS programming. An Ensign in the Los Angeles headquarters acted as the Navy's liaison. Besides the land-based stations, AFRS was supplying a weekly transcription package and the entire music library to submarines and service ships.(13)

#### THE 1,000,000TH DISC

To supply the increasing number of stations and ships, AFRS pressed its one-millionth disc for shipment overseas in March, 1945. Lewis received the symbolic 16-inch plastic disc in a brief ceremony on the 12th. On the disc was the newest issue of "G.I. Journal" whose cast included Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Linda Darnell, Betty Grable and Abbott and Costello.

All battle and supply areas overseas received each of the half-hour discs flown to them. It was a logistics feat equal to any carried out during the war. The weekly packages transferred from station to station on planned circuits. The packages included suggested program schedules and script suggestions for the locally-produced programs. In a speech to the Advertising Club in Los Angeles commemorating the 25th anniversary of radio on February 6, 1945, AFRS Commander Lewis explained radio's task this way: The Air Force had one target - the enemy. In contrast, radio had three targets - Americans at home, friends and enemies in foreign lands and the American troops all over the world. AFRS was a big job.

Lewis said, "'Victory through Air Power' has come to mean not just wings of steel over Berlin and Tokyo - but wings of words over the World! Before radio, the pen might have been mightier than the sword, but, radio has made the spoken word a weapon of war. It is far more than rhetoric to say that words are a sniper's bullet! A rocket shell from a landing boat! Words are long range artillery! Words are 'bombs away!' Words are ideas and this is a war of ideas! The free mind of Democracy is at war with the slave mind of Totalitarianism!"

Lewis told his audience that AFRS was playing its part by reaching the troops in the field "as a superhighway bringing the sound and memory of America to its sons and daughters - providing forgetfulness to the wounded - relaxation to those tense from the fatigue of battle - filling the void of home-sickness and the emptiness of boredom - providing up-to-the-minute news for the anxious - education for the ambitious - orientation on the meaning of this war for all!"

While these were the foals of Lewis and his staff, to most of the men in the field, AFRS undoubtedly was just "a little bit of home."

Lewis conveyed all this in a letter he read to the audience. In it, a Chief Steward aboard a Merchant Marine ship off the Normandy beaches described the impact radio had on him:

"It's not a pretty sight to see American ships blown up by a floating mine or a direct hit from one of the shore guns. Believe me, this was really a test of nerves. Can you imagine how we felt when we came into the mess room for a cup of coffee and to sit down for half an hour? The radio was on and there was a broadcast from the American Forces Network, of 'Command Performance.' It was good to hear the other crew members laugh at the jokes of the radio stars and hum the same tunes that the vocalist was singing. For just a moment, the grim business of carrying out the war seemed so remote. I imagined that I was at home safely listening to my bedroom radio. Listening to their radio here in the ship's mess room seemed to give a lift to all the crew.

"...And when they called us on deck to abandon ship  
— the radio was still playing."

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 13

- (1) Symposium discussion; Interview with Al Scalpone, September 16, 1982.
- (2) Symposium.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Symposium, July 13, 1983.
- (5) Interview with Sylvester Weaver, June 21, 1983.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) *Radio Daily*, December 2, 1944.
- (10) Jane and Woodrow Wirsing, "Here's Hill!"  
*This Week Magazine*, April 22, 1945.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) *Daily Variety*, June 2, 1944.

## BROADCASTING IN THE PACIFIC

In his speech to the Ad Club, Tom Lewis described how the Armed Forces Radio stations followed "the sound of the guns" wherever American troops were fighting: on land, on the sea and under the sea, and even to airplanes in flight. In military terms, radio was "on the offensive." It was bringing "*a little bit of home*" to the servicemen – and it was helping even more to bring servicemen back home.

After three years of effort, the huge wall map at their Headquarters reflected flags that denoted more and more stations in operation. "There's still that soldier," he said, "that Navy man, somewhere not yet reached by any of our efforts. There's still that spot waiting for its transmitter or its receiver. Our job is to find that man and fill that need. [There are] three things we've learned so far: nothing's perfect, nothing's complete, nothing's static. There's nothing perfect in war - perhaps because perfection is peace."(1)

### THE MOSQUITO NETWORK

In contrast to AFN-Europe the troops island-hopping across the Pacific had no resources of their own to draw from in establishing radio operations. So, AFRS became more directly involved in setting up stations. The tropical heat and moisture combined to limit the useful life of the radio receivers to about four months, which further exacerbated the shortage of radios among the troops. Finally, the Army developed and sent overseas a compact plastic-sprayed set that was virtually waterproof.(2)

In early 1944 the station at Noumea became the flagship station of what became known as The Mosquito Network of seven stations spread across the Southwest Pacific. Because of the distance that separated the islands, it remained a network in name and perception only. It functioned more as an association of outlets, each providing news, education and information to its isolated military audience.

A station was erected on Guadalcanal following the one on Noumea. It began test broadcasting on March 1, 1945. The station's commanding officer, Captain Spencer Allen, and his crew of two officers and eight enlisted men, arrived on February 15, after going through the training course at AFRS headquarters. Army engineers and Signal

Corpsmen erected a twenty- by forty-foot wooden shack in a muddy coconut grove to house the studio and control room. The staff then set up the equipment, which it had brought with them. Power for the broadcasts came from a Signal Corps generator driven by a Jeep motor. After a brief shakedown period, the station went on the air officially on March 13, 1945. It had a normal range of thirty-five to fifty miles, although it occasionally reached out as far as a thousand miles.(3)

Like all AFRS operations, the station broadcast fifteen minutes of the latest news at 7:00 and 8:00 AM each morning. At 12:30 PM, several times a week, chaplains of different faiths gave spiritual talks. The evening broadcast schedule included the standard AFRS transcribed programs. As Captain Allen told a Marine combat correspondent shortly after the station opened, its facilities were available to each of the Services stationed on Guadalcanal. He explained that he planned to keep open a half-hour each night for the different units. Other locally-produced programs included shows by the Red Cross band, concerts, religious services at the memorial chapel and live descriptions of amateur boxing matches held on the island.(4)

A year after the first stations went on the air, Allen became a Major and Chief of the Armed Forces Radio Service, Southern Pacific Bases Command. He commanded the stations on New Caledonia, Guadalcanal, Munda, Bougainville, Espiritu Santo, Nandi and Tutila. Allen observed, "We have completed the pioneering. Broadcasting has become a routine, businesslike procedure. Gone is the haywire. In its place are commercial transmitters and consoles, heavy-duty turntables and recording equipment, professional amplifiers and microphones. We're on the air, hour after hour, on split-second schedules." In contrast to the breakdowns and dead air in the early days of the Mosquito Network, broadcast problems had become rare by April, 1945.(5)

The most important aspect of the Mosquito Network was that it became an integral part of the soldiers' lives, right up there with food, work, training, movies and mail. The listeners came to resemble radio audiences back in the States. Allen explained, "Where once the listener was happy if we played nothing but Harry James recordings all day, now he's a critic. We're downright abused if we clip the last two minutes of the NBC Symphony to join San Francisco [short-wave] for the news, or if we cancel 'Your Radio Theater ('Lux, to you'),' or if we play 'Rum and Coca Cola' too many times. In short, the longer we're in operation, the more conservative and demanding the G.I.s become in their listener tastes. We use the phrase 'comparable to standard American commercial broadcasting practices' to indicate the tone by which the Mosquito Network operates."(6)

### THE FIRST "SPOTS"

The Network's primary job was to create good morale which Allen believed the stations accomplished "automatically, just by being on the air with Stateside shows and good local programs." Like commercial stations, the Mosquito Network had information to sell, such as mosquito repellent. A typical spot announcement told the soldiers:

"Are YOU repellent? Yes? Then use Tougoours Gai; it keeps the mosquitoes away. Remember, rub it in your delicate skin each evening as the sun goes down. Thank YOU."(7)

The "commercials" and their delivery were every bit as sophisticated as advertisements presented back home. For instance, taking atabrine was essential to avoid malaria in the regions of the South Pacific. Since the soldiers often forgot, the network stations developed a campaign to remind them. On Guadalcanal, the station featured "The Atabrine Cocktail Hour" each evening at 5:30. The program consisted of fifteen minutes of recorded music and contained no direct reference to the taking of atabrine. Yet, the subliminal message came through, as the announcer pretended to bring the listener "cocktail music" from some sumptuous lounge such as the "Fungus Festooned Fern Room" or "The Starlight Roof high atop Hotel DeGink in downtown Guadalcanal." A soldier would listen to find out from where the "Atabrine Cocktail Hour" was "originating." Without even realizing it, he'd hear "atabrine" at least twice, thereby reinforcing the idea that he should take his medicine.(8)

The Mosquito Network stations "unabashedly borrowed" their style of "infomercials" from the most recognizable spots on radio back home. They "advertised" not only to fight mosquitoes and malaria, but also to sell security through silence. The "DT/SMS (Don't Talk, Silence Means Security)" campaign irritated the Lucky Strike "LS/MFT" slogan. It was corny and perhaps even bad radio, but it was effective.

"I defy anyone to find one soldier out of a hundred on New Caledonia who doesn't know that 'DT/SMS' means today," Allen argued.(9)

Information and entertainment were primary products, while each of the outlets also provided news up to fourteen times a day. Mostly they rebroadcast the short-wave pickups directly from the United States. Although the stations had captive audiences, the motivating idea was to keep the listeners content. Each station tried to provide the same mixture of the news, sports, and entertainment as was broadcast back home. This approach worked as well in the South Pacific as it did in the United States.(10)

The program mixture also worked well with New

Zealanders who listened to the Mosquito Network station at Mangere, near Auckland. Early in '44, the New Zealand government gave AFRS a radio frequency to provide information and entertainment to American servicemen stationed in their country. The New Zealand Broadcasting Service (NZBS) provided technicians to operate the station and the Mosquito Network Command sent four qualified enlisted men to service as the program personnel. The station became the southernmost outlet of the Network. It broadcast both the regular AFRS transcription package and locally-produced programs, recorded and live.

While the station existed for the benefit of the U.S. Forces in New Zealand, the Americanized program schedule had an important impact on civilians. In letters to the station, the New Zealanders expressed appreciation for the AFRS programs and for the understanding which they helped promote between their country and the United States. "We feel that we have learned to appreciate your American viewpoint, as perhaps you have done with regard to us 'EnZedders,'" one listener wrote.

The station went off the air in December, 1944, after only eight months of operation. A writer to the *Auckland Star* wrote, "It's been so nice to know you. Parting is such sweet sorrow. You've taught us how to smile, a lesson we so badly needed. The old town won't seem the same when the American station is off the air. Many a radio will want for use when you're gone, mine especially."(11)

### THE JUNGLE NETWORK

The Mosquito Network was not the only AFRS operation in the Pacific. In the Central Pacific, the Jungle Network covered the vast territory from the Hawaiian Islands to the Philippines. Given the wide ocean expanse, the Navy, under the Command of Admiral Chester Nimitz, assumed command of the area. As the Army moved onto the islands that dotted the sea, the local commanders began seeking AFRS service for their troops. Their request reached AFRS headquarters in the spring of 1943, and Lewis ordered Boardman to go to the mid-Pacific to plan for station activities.

Departing in May, 1943, Boardman faced the job of convincing local Navy Officers of the need for stations on islands they commanded. Because the islands had both Army and Navy personnel stationed on them, Boardman had to obtain authorization from commanders of both services. He then had to explain to the Navy Command at their Mid-Pacific Headquarters the value of providing radio to the soldiers and sailors in the field. Only after all this effort did he secure a joint working agreement to begin establishing radio stations.

The first broadcast operation began on New Guinea as a joint venture of the United States Army and the Australian Broadcast Company. Located at Port Moresby on the southern coast of the island, the station began operating on February 26, 1944. Australian Captain Robin Wood and U.S. Army Captain Edgar Tidwell commanded a six-man American contingent. In May, Tidwell began the first purely AFRS station at Nadzab on New Guinea. The station signed on the air May 8, located precariously on the side of a hill that at various times was either sundrenched or rain-swept.

While Nadzab went on the air first, Finschaafen, which was operational on June 4, became the flagship station of the Jungle Network. Located in a twenty-by-forty-foot prefabricated hut atop a hill overlooking the Finsch harbor, only a deeply muddied road provided access to the station. Besides the main building, the facility included tents for the enlisted men and officers, and a generator shelter. The studios were practically inaccessible, so the staff produced live shows down the hill in an engineer recreation hall.(12)

By the end of August, Ted Sherdeman, the Jungle Network Commander, had an opportunity to put the operation in perspective. In a letter to Lewis, he detailed the nature of broadcasting in the Central Pacific. His analysis of conditions and philosophy of operation provides an excellent picture of AFRS in the field. He warned Lewis: "Don't, to the slightest degree, wave the flag. It's sure death. I'd suggest you have every script carefully gone over by somebody who's been over here - I mean somebody who's been stuck in New Guinea for a while. The brief inspection trips can't reveal the truths of what men feel in this country. Only those who have lived in it and gone through the loving and hating it can tell whether a script is honest or not. If it isn't honest, if it doesn't ring true to them - they'll jeer it down."(13)

In his concept of operation, Sherdeman saw entertainment as a carrot to draw listeners to the information and education mission of AFRS. "The I & E Section seeks the mental good that comes from men receiving accurate and timely information about the war, themselves, their country and their home. We want to stimulate their thinking about everything from algebra to maintaining a truck. Radio entertainment, as provided by you, is the shimmy dancer in front of our medicine tent. When the dancer is through, we sell the health medicine of the day to the crowd that gathers, just as we sold soap after the last joke at home."(14)

According to Sherdeman, the stations under his command had two missions. First, they would provide the best possible service to their immediate area. Second, they'd serve "the men of the base to the exclusion of all others." To accomplish this purpose, the station com-

mander should contact the base commander or his immediate subordinates at least once each week. He should seek to "discover what problems have arisen that the radio station can help solve, from accident prevention to conservation and security measures. No Commanding Officer of a base has problems which, if they require the cooperation of the enlisted men, the radio station can't help solve. We're proving the radio stations can and do solve problems right along. We gather them in with Bing Crosby and then sell them their atabrine. It works."

Sherdeman believed that the AFRS stations should provide "the best possible service to the theatre command. Theatre problems are a main concern of AFRS headquarters. They prepare scripts and announcements and send them out to each station, specifying the time and day for broadcast."(15)

Following the policies which Lewis had established, no officers appeared on the air except for Chaplains, Base Commanders or General Officers. An enlisted man served as the station's Program Director. He was responsible to the Officer In Charge for all program matters except censorship. In this capacity, he maintained the ideal of AFRS functioning "by and for the enlisted man." The service encouraged the enlisted men at each station to work out their own problems. The Officer In Charge had a role of "guiding but not leading."(16)

Reports such as Sherdeman's helped AFRS improve its service during a time of continual expansion of outlets. To provide additional information, Lewis dispatched Austin Peterson, Chief of the Program Section, to the Pacific. Peterson's reports, in the form of long letters, provide a detailed account of AFRS operations in the Pacific in early 1945.

Peterson's accounts showed how AFRS had become so intimately involved with the life of the troops. On the first leg of his trip, from Seattle to Hawaii, Peterson found that the men's initial contact with AFRS came as soon as they left mainland shores. Aboard the transport ship, a PA system played music from V-Discs, the AFRS music library and transcriptions, sports events rebroadcast from short-wave, and news. Peterson had an immediate suggestion that material provided for transports should contain nothing that would date it or sound "like we're giving the boys old stuff. Phrases like 'Here's a brand new tune' - or, 'high in popularity poll today is 'Mairzy Doats'" should be shunned like malaria."(17)

By the time Peterson reached Kwajalein, he'd come to the realization that AFRS had underestimated the life of its discs. He concluded that "no AFRS disc ever dies - its soul goes creeping from turntable to turntable into eternity. That's why I feel we should survey our smaller shows, make them timeless and just as good listening two years from now as today."(18)

### **EARLY SCRAPPING FOR PARTS**

By the time he reached Saipan, Peterson determined that a serious shortage of radios existed in the field. Early war directives had prevented soldiers from taking radios overseas. That created a problem of a lack of receivers. The Saipan station had distributed 341 radios to hospitals and other strategic listening points on a loan basis, wherein all borrowers had to sign for the sets.

In his letter to Lewis from Manila, Peterson wrote, "Not enough radios in forward area. When you talk about a station coming in, they say 'what's the good of a station if you don't have a radio?' I think they have something there. It hurts me to think what even 1,000 radios would mean in Manila right now." (19)

Peterson found similar shortages in station equipment. On Saipan, the station had to borrow a short-wave receiver from the OWI and on Guam, one from the base communications office. He wrote, "Seems a shame we force stations in the field to chisel and borrow equipment that should be automatic issue. The greatest thing in the world to get a new station off to a flying start is to send in the station completely equipped from quonset to typewriter." (20)

Peterson undoubtedly expected too much from AFRS and the Armed Forces. Shortages were to be expected as the military prepared for the final assault on Japan. Typical of military creativity, local commanders were continually providing the resources to upgrade facilities. To be sure, some stations remained rather primitive.

George Verner was back from New Guinea after two years working at the Jungle Network station. He recalled how the staff put together the studio: "We fold Army Blankets and wrap them around the walls, inside and out. On the ceiling, we use an open parachute, both for ornamental effect and to improve the acoustics." (21)

By the time Peterson arrived on Guam, most stations had acquired or were in the process of building permanent facilities. The Guam station had completed plans for new facilities and construction had begun on an auditorium for 150-person studios, and offices. The work was a combined effort of the navy SeaBees and Japanese prisoners. The military police provided security. (22)

In due course, most of the stations obtained adequate facilities such as the one Peterson found at Ulithi. He located the well-camouflaged building "about 200-feet off the road... an ideal location for a radio station. That is, it's *ideal* if you don't mind having a fuel dump on one side of you and an ammunition dump on the other!" (23)

### **PROGRAMMING IN THE TROPICS**

As Chief of Programming, Peterson always concerned

himself with what the troops were hearing on the radio. At Eniwetok, for example, he found that the nine most popular shows were: "Command Performance," "G.I. Journal," "Mail Call," "Jubilee," "Personal Album," "G.I. Jive," "Yank Swing Session," "Downbeat" and "Melody Round-Up." Another popular show in the Jungle Network area was "Uncle Efrim." It was locally-produced and broadcast during the noon hour at Hollandia. A takeoff on the popular stateside character known as Uncle Ezra, Efrim would ad lib and play country and western records daily for fifteen minutes. (24)

### **AFRS KEEPS ON GROWING**

An ever-growing number of outlets received the local programs and the AFRS package. From 120 stations in December, 1943, the AFRS network grew to 154 stations by March, 1945. Outlets covered all corners of the World including the Middle East, Europe, North Africa, the China-Burma-India Theater, Alaska, the Caribbean, Central America, and the South Pacific. In addition, AFRS operated 143 public address systems overseas and the Bedside Network in veterans' hospitals throughout the United States. Each outlet received the AFRS packet of transcriptions containing an average of 126 separate programs either specially-produced by the Hollywood headquarters or decommercialized shows.

AFRS was a broadcast operation that provided something for everyone. Spencer Allen, the Chief of the Mosquito Network, responded to a question of why AFRS catered to mass tastes when it might give the men "better things." "Actually, we're probably more high-brow than the average station back home. Nonetheless, we don't forget that our servicemen are a cross-section. They want Benny and Hope, Harry James and Kay Kyser, John Charles Thomas and the NBC Symphony. They want them in just about the same proportion your listeners in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Plum Tree Crossing back home want them. So we give it to them in that proportion - otherwise, we're going to lose some customers and Tokyo Rose will gain some." (25)

By September, 1945, the American Forces landed in Yokohama. The Allies arrested Tokyo Rose, and AFRS reached to all corners of the world. It had carried out its mission better than anyone would've thought possible back when Tom Lewis received his mandate to create a military radio operation in May, 1942. Observing AFRS in operation during his four-month tour, Austin Peterson could not contain his enthusiasm. He wrote to Lewis, "I swore when I got back, I wouldn't use the phrase 'You're doing a grand job' but damn if they aren't. If you are to be truthful, what else can you say? All you have to do is see what radio means to men out here and it makes it all worthwhile." (26)

## POST-WAR RADIO

The creativity found in AFRS-originated programming marked the high point in radio broadcast history. The end of the war by no means signified the end of Armed Forces Radio. Some would say that Armed Forces Radio performed its most important work during the immediate postwar period.

In such places as Mindanao, the AFRS station broadcast special instructions to Japanese still hiding in the nearby hills. For two hours each day, American-born Japanese instructed Japanese soldiers how to surrender and assured them that the Americans would comply with all rules of the Geneva Conventions. To insure the soldiers would be able to hear the messages, the Army dropped radios by parachute to selected regions. Included in the packages were operating instructions in Japanese and information on how to tune to the station's frequency.(27)

Convincing the Japanese that everything would be all right was not a new technique for AFRS. Stations had been educating and informing audiences about health, careers, savings bonds and many other things for almost three years. When it was over, AFRS faced a new command information job - preparing the troops for the transition from military back to civilians life. Even before the day of victory, AFRS prepared a series of programs explaining how troops would be discharged. Radio became the vehicle for explaining to others who remained, and to new troops arriving, their importance as the occupying force.

Back home in the Los Angeles Headquarters, the writers, producers and technicians all tried to get out of uniform as quickly as possible. Entertainers lost interest in contributing their talents. As Martin Work took command from Lewis in October, 1945, he faced the problems of maintaining product quality while cutting back on original programming.

While the post-war period both in Hollywood and around the world taxed their creativity, once again AFRS came through. Operations of the Armed Forces Radio Service continued without interruption.

However, like the troops they served, AFRS found itself in transition.

## NOTES - CHAPTER 14

- (1) Tom Lewis, *Victory Through Air Power*, February 6, 1945.
- (2) *Time*, July 17, 1944.
- (3) Spencer Allen, Letter to AFRTS, February 1, 1984, *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, May 7, 1944, Pt 3, p 71.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) *Broadcasting*, April 30, 1945.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid; *Time*, July 17, 1944.
- (8) Allen, *Broadcasting*.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) *They loved us in New Zealand!* The Mosquito Network, Information Education Section, South Pacific Base Command, March 10, 1945.
- (12) Major Ted Sherdeman to Col Tom Lewis, August 31, 1944.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Austin Peterson, *Hitchhiker on AFRS Road to Tokyo*, A collection of letters, n.d.[December 1944 - March 1945], cited hereafter as Peterson.
- (18) Peterson.
- (19) Peterson.
- (20) Peterson.
- (21) Hollywood Radio Studios, Jungle Stations Contrasted, *Citizen News*, February 27, 1945.
- (22) Peterson.
- (23) Peterson.
- (24) Peterson.
- (25) Spencer Allen, *Broadcasting*, April 30, 1945.
- (26) Peterson.
- (27) Armed Forces Radio Service, *AFRS Playback*, October 22, 1945, p 9.

## AFRS IN THE TRANSITION YEARS

AFN may not have carried General Eisenhower's victory message, but, thanks to Ben Hoberman, the Network did manage to scoop the world in reporting the victory over Japan.

Hoberman had returned to Paris from helping Bob Light set up the Munich station, and was Officer of the Day at AFN on Sunday, August 12, 1945. Like everyone else, he'd heard rumors that Japan was about to surrender. He decided there must be a way of determining the accuracy of the stories. "I picked up the telephone," he recounts, "and called the Japanese military attache in Bern, Switzerland. I figured I was calling a neutral country. I didn't want to be confused with communicating with the enemy."(1)

"The timing of it was marvelous. The attache, who spoke magnificent English, was crying on the telephone with me in response to my question of whether it was true that the Japanese had surrendered. He'd just gotten off the phone with the Minister of War, who had confirmed that the Japanese had surrendered. I immediately called AFN Headquarters in London with the news. I had no thoughts of simply reporting the news from Paris because it was a big story. I recognized that it should come out of our main news operation. That's how AFRS would do it."(2)

Such initiative helped give the AFN news operation the credibility to draw to it a civilian audience throughout Europe in the post-war years.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

This period of transition lacked the drama of the wartime conditions. When the American fighting man suddenly found himself with time on his hands, it became essential that he know what was going to happen in the coming weeks and months. In Europe and in the Pacific, AFRS readied itself with a series of specially-prepared programs detailing the new peacetime situation. Meanwhile, the Hollywood headquarters and the affiliates continued to send out a full schedule of entertainment programs.

Lewis' organization would undergo major changes as soon as hostilities concluded. Immediately after V-J Day, AFRS prepared an "Armed Forces Radio Service Forward Plan" for the period from November 1, 1945, to July 1,

1946. The three-volume plan set forth the premise: "The Armed Forces Radio Service will serve as long as there is a justifiable number of military personnel overseas and in the hospitals in the Zone of the Interior.

Assuming that troop withdrawals would be made rapidly, the Plan directed AFRS to begin a gradual reduction in its program services on July 1, 1946. Then, a new plan was to be drawn up "based upon the crystallization of the national policy of the War and Navy Departments."(3)

Would AFRS remain in operation once the war ended or would it wind up in mothballs to await another conflict? Although the permanence of AFRS would not come until after the Korean War, the Army's Information and Education Division approved the Forward Plan and instructed Lewis to implement it. That decision awarded continuity to the information and entertainment activities, and to two lesser known AFRS activities, the short-wave function and the Bedside Network.

AFRS had been sending out programming from studios in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco via short-wave since 1943. Although news, sports and special events accounted for most of the schedule, some entertainment shows such as "G.I. Jive," "Melody Roundup," and "Command Performance" were also broadcast. Besides straight sportscasts, AFRS Sports produced question-and-answer shows where the on-the-air replies sometimes featured responses directly from athletes and coaches. Because of the daily limitations on the numbers of hours the OWI transmitters could operate, AFRS either edited most of the baseball and football games before putting them on the air or recreated them from teletype accounts.

Despite the presumption that sports programming would be the most popular short-wave broadcasts, the Army News Service found that "interest in sports is variable and spotty. The longer men have been away from home, the less interest they seem to have in state-side sports."(7) As troops rotated from overseas and new replacements came from the United States, sports would once again become the centerpiece of the short-wave operation.

After the war, the New York office broadcast three hours a day over four transmitters to Europe, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. On the West Coast, AFRS closed the San Francisco studios and Los Angeles took over the entire short-wave operation. Seven transmitters carried eleven hours of AFRS material and delivered them to the Pacific. Again, the success of the broadcasts could be measured by the quantity of fan mail that the headquarters received, not only from Armed Forces personnel, but also from foreign nationals who expressed a special interest in American programming.

## THE BEDSIDE NETWORK

The other lesser-known component of AFRS, the Bedside Network, began operating during the war, supplying transcriptions to military hospitals in the United States. The headquarters in Los Angeles supplied each hospital with the Basic Music Library and the Troop Information Programs, totalling seventeen hours of material. Since patients could pick up commercial programming, too, the hospital package didn't include any decommercialized shows. During the war and for a period afterwards, AFRS distributed the Bedside Network package to the hospital circuits and let the individual facilities provide transmission. AFRS headquarters later provided technical equipment to the internal broadcast systems in the hospitals and provided training staffs to operate the stations.

Chaotic and uncertain conditions in the early post-war period mitigated against any orderly implementation of Lewis' Forward Plan. Despite the stated concerns about the problems that would occur during the turnover in personnel, the actual changes in key people occurred more rapidly than anticipated. The entertainers, writers, and directors-turned-soldiers wanted to return to their jobs in commercial radio as soon as possible. In addition, since Lewis had recruited most of his staff early in the war, many had accumulated enough points to qualify for discharge.

Lewis tried from the beginning of the transition period to prepare AFRS for the new challenges of peacetime. In the September 17, 1945, edition of *AFRS Playback*, Lewis told the staff, "Your job in the war just passed has been one of the greatest. You've suffered hardships, undergone many privations, yet you've done this willingly because you know what Armed Forces Radio programs and services have meant to our troops." Lewis said the men's future in radio would be enhanced because of the AFRS experience. "Before we all return to that life we've dreamed about for so long, let's be sure that one challenge we prepared AFRS to meet is still before it—the challenge of assuring the continuation of AFRS as long as there's a need."

Lewis left AFRS on October 25, 1945, and returned to Young and Rubicam, as Vice President in charge of the agency's radio operation. Major Martin Work, who had replaced True Boardman in Lewis' Executive Officer, assumed command of the organization pending the assignment of a regular Army Officer. By the middle of '46, a semblance of a civilian production staff had begun to emerge.

Command of AFRS remained within the military as a joint Army-Navy (and later Air Force) function. Operational control rested with the Radio Section, Troop Information Branch, Troop Information & Education

Division, Special Staff, Department of the Army. In contrast to the war years, when Lewis made the policy decisions for AFRS, policy oversight passed to Washington in the post-war period. The Los Angeles headquarters now had responsibility for executing the, production, distribution, technical advice and technical supply. The broadcasting know-how, previously supplied by professional radio people in uniform, now came from civilians choosing to work for the government rather than in commercial radio. The evolution of this combined military/civilian operation became the cornerstone of the peacetime Armed Forces Radio Service.

## POST-WAR PROGRAMMING

Larry Gelbart, of later "M\*A\*S\*H" fame, arrived at AFRS in early 1946 as a Private. After going through basic training, he received his assignment as a writer working on "Command Performance." Continuing its wartime format, the program answered letters from the troops asking for the appearance of particular entertainers. At times when the program had a commitment from a personality but no request, Gelbart simply manufactured a letter.(8)

Throughout Gelbart's year of writing solely for "Command Performance," the program retained its high caliber, thanks to civilian director/producer Claire Weidhaar and the continued access to such entertainers as Frank Sinatra, Crosby and Hope. With an end to wartime tensions and the need to take the men's minds off impending combat, the sketches and dialogue sounded more like commercial radio. The program still tried to entertain the troops much as it had done during the war, but the staff was directing its material "more for the boys away from home than for troops in danger or who wouldn't come back," Gelbart said.(9)

These days, the military nature of AFRS became less significant. "It was peacetime," Gelbart notes. "The ranks were very thin. I remember I treated myself to an officers' uniforms even though I was a Sergeant. There was no red tape nor military formalities. It was just like working on a regular radio show." Nevertheless, Gelbart did occasionally pull night duty to guard the facility.

"I think my job was to prevent people from stealing jokes or something," he quips.

Like his wartime counterparts, Gelbart was able to moonlight on civilian radio shows.

"Nobody seemed to mind."(10)

Despite the continued production of "Command Performance," AFRS began to experience a decline in the production of in-house programs. There was a loss of services from the entertainment community, changes in personnel and the need to economize on all production activities. At the end of the war, the Hollywood head-

quarters was turning out twenty hours a week of original programming. Although AFRS brought in civilian writers, producers and musicians to work with the new uniformed staff, they represented a cost directly chargeable to each production. That hadn't been the case during the war. By the beginning of 1947, AFRS had reduced its original productions to fourteen-hours a week. Peacetime versions of "Command Performance," "G.I. Jill," and other programs continued on a smaller scale than the wartime shows.

The remaining forty-one hours of weekly program material sent out in the transcription package came from the commercial networks.

Important for the basic mission of AFRS, 1947 saw the beginning of a new information and education program. Previously, the Troop Information activity had been primarily a wartime device. It informed the troops about the reasons for the war and to prepare them for a return to civilian life or as an occupying army. The new program had a different emphasis. Its foundation was in the historical aspects of the military and the American way of life. Its educational component taught the soldier about his heritage in order to foster pride in his service and country. AFRS included in the program package suitable programs from the commercial networks, and produced in-house original live documentaries.

Between 1947 and 1953, AFRS produced nineteen series that portrayed the virtues of the American way.

One show, "Ambassador of Good Will," portrayed American soldiers in occupied zones as ambassadors of American ideals and democratic ideas. "This Is The Story," later called "Liberty Theater," presented selected dramatizations that stressed the ideas of the American way of life as exemplified in both contemporary and historical episodes. "The Pendleton Story" dramatized a boy and his family in the new nation from 1776 to 1801. And, each episode of "Medal of Honor" honored a different man who had earned the nations' highest award.

While stressing the virtues of life in the United States, the service also took special care to portray the negative side of the Soviet Union. "This is Russia" presented life in the Soviet Union as supposedly seen through the eyes of a typical Soviet citizen. "Anti-communism" first dramatized actual incidents within the Soviet Union or its satellites. After the first 26 programs, the series shifted its setting to Springfield, U.S.A. to show what could happen if communism took over America.

While the production of these live information and education programs increased, entertainment shows decreased. This was not only because of the cost of programming, but also because of a growing reluctance of leading performers to appear on a regular basis. Bob

Hope, for one, said in 1948: "I'll do one show per year for the Army -- that's all. I feel obligated to do other benefits just as important to my country, like cancer, Red Cross, USO, and so forth."

To a significant degree, the talent problem didn't center so much on obtaining the occasional services of big show business stars, but with the hiring of *supporting* actors and musicians. During the war years, supporting actors and musicians used on the entertainment programs had received a token fee under arrangements worked out with the various guilds. The average rate was \$10 for a 30-minute program with a minimum two-hour rehearsal. The agreement continued until 1947 when the American Federation of Theatrical, Radio Actors (AFTRA) and the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) asked for a review of the previous concessions. AFTRA felt that the rate was no longer equitable in view of rising living costs and the lack of a military emergency. The musicians guild, whose members had a slightly higher rate of compensation under the wartime agreement, asked that its members receive the full transcription rate when they performed in the future. After all, AFM argued, AFRS continued to enjoy free and unlimited license to use all recorded and network music in making up its transcription packages.

AFRS negotiated a compromise that established a uniform concession arrangement for both guilds. The agreement provided for slight, stepped increases in the compensation over a five-year-period until 1952. Then the guild members would receive a fee pegged at one-third of the prevailing commercial transcription rate. On its part, AFRS had to accept two conditions. First, the compensation rate was to be based on a minimum number of musicians and actors expected to be hired during one year's production operation. Second, unemployed actors and musicians were to have preferential hiring rights.

While this settlement made it more difficult to fund AFRS in-house productions, it didn't mean that the communications industry lacked an appreciation for the importance of military radio. While manufacturers of ships, planes, tanks and other munitions enjoyed profits from government contracts, both AFM and AFTRA have continued to grant many concessions to the Armed Forces. In 1948, AFM had specifically exempted AFRS from its year-long national recording ban that affected all recording companies. AFM also actively supported the peacetime version of the "Jubilee" series in 1946 and 1947. The organization paid the musicians directly out of its Welfare and Music for the Wounded Fund at a cost of more than \$35,000.

The increased cost of production for AFRS created problems in its continued efforts to maintain high quality.

By 1950, the organization reached the conclusion that it could not maintain both information and entertainment programming within the allotted fund structure. Defering to its primary mission, AFRS opted to devote its resources to education and information. As a result, the headquarters ended "Command Performance" and other live entertainment shows during that year. To replace the in-house entertainment productions, AFRS increased its use of decommercialized network and local programs to sixty hours a week.

From then on, the Hollywood headquarters operated primarily as a distribution center for news, information, and entertainment programming. It functioned secondarily as the producer of education and information material geared exclusively to Americans in uniform.

"Command Performance," "Mail Call," "Jubilee," and all the other classic original AFRS programs had been aberrations. Only the unique wartime conditions, demanding an all-out effort from the nations' entertainers, made them possible. In peacetime, however, troops in remote areas would undoubtedly benefit more from the familiar entertainment they'd enjoyed back home. This included not only the top-rated network programs, but the in-house AFRS music shows, produced using local disc jockeys and AFRS civilian employees.

The Armed Forces Radio Service that emerged from the transition held fast to the mission and the guidelines

it had established in '42. It still broadcast command information and education. It still provided regularly scheduled news and entertainment programs little different from those broadcast in the United States.

Now it had a new combined civilian/military staff, a limited budget and a new reliance on decommercialized programs. The Armed Forces Radio Service could only fondly remember those classic programs of its infancy, and the excitement and creativity that so distinguished it in the wartime operations.

But, they weren't through making history.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 15

- (1) Hoberman interview.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) *Armed Forces Radio Service Forward Plan*, November 1, 1945, to July 1, 1946.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) *William Murphy to Army News Service Personnel*, August 6, 1945.
- (8) Interview with Larry Gelbart, August 4, 1943.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.

## AFRS IN POST-WAR AND KOREA

The loss of original entertainment programming production at Hollywood headquarters weakened AFRS's connection with operations in the field. To Roy Neal, the first Station Manager at AFN-Frankfurt, "AFRS was something 'over there' whose shortwave sounded terrible and whose records were marvelous. That's all AFRS was to us. It was a source of records."

That growing independence from Los Angeles didn't lessen the importance of military broadcasting for the troops overseas. A poll taken in the United States during 1945-46 showed that only one person in ten across the country owned a radio. Yet, in the area covered by AFN, the PX sold 102,000 radios in the first year of operation. That figures out to one radio for every three soldiers.<sup>(1)</sup>

There was no doubt a strong desire for "a little bit of home" by the occupying forces. Still, the Armed Forces Network had no assurance that AFRS would continue into the postwar period. The survival of military broadcasting depended on how well it fulfilled its mission of informing and educating its audience with entertainment and news.

In October, 1945, Roy Neal asked General Eisenhower if he would speak on the radio to the troops. They were growing edgy about not going home. It turned out to be the Supreme Commander's farewell speech, one which AFN fed to the world.

Eisenhower didn't deal with the matter of troop rotation, however, and the problem grew worse under his successor, General Joseph McNarney. There was even talk of a strike among the troops and according to Neal, the threat "was quite real."<sup>(2)</sup>

### I & E BECOMES ENTERTAINMENT

To solve the problem, Neal came up with an idea: "My plan was very basic. If you talk to people, if you communicate to them on their level, then usually you can reason with them." Neal introduced a question-and-answer program to the troops in a series of spot announcements. The spots encouraged the soldiers to send in postcards with questions for the Army command. Each week, the network selected representative questions. The soldiers who sent in the selected queries flew to (AFN-) Frankfurt to sit down with the Generals and ask their questions on the air, live, on Sunday evenings.<sup>(3)</sup>

The program began in December, 1945.

"The show not only worked, but within two to three weeks, the troops knew when they could plan on going home. They knew how the point system worked. They knew troops were coming in and in what numbers. They knew where those troops were going to go because the Generals were answering their questions."<sup>(4)</sup>

The program also helped improve the image of AFN. After the troop anxiousness died down, General McNarney sent letters of appreciation to the Network. His Chief of Staff followed with a call asking why both officers and enlisted staff at AFN had such low ranks. Neal explained that everyone at the network had arrived in a temporary duty status:

"There's no table of organization for this outfit. None of us ever get a raise. Actor Mickey Rooney has been around here for two years. He came in as a buck Sergeant and he's still a buck Sergeant." The General told Neal to ask Lieutenant Colonel Oren Swain, the Network's senior officer, to draft a table of organization. The General promised it would be approved.<sup>(5)</sup>

It's uncertain if Mickey ever got his promotion.

Meanwhile, AFN began coverage of one of the most significant events of the immediate postwar period. In early November, 1945, Johnny Hayes, AFN-Frankfurt News Director called Corporal Harold Burson into his office to discuss "an assignment that we've got to fill, a very sensitive one." Burson worked in the news department. He'd transferred from the AFN-Paris office in July. He'd worked with the Corps of Engineers, the 12th Army's Publicity and Psychological Warfare Detachment and the Press Section of the 15th Army.

"I need somebody who is apolitical," Hayes explained, "somebody who'll report what he hears. The event is the Nuernberg Trial. We want to staff it and we want to make a major effort at covering it. We're prepared to give you fifteen minutes every night at 9 PM."<sup>(6)</sup>

Burson, who'd been a reporter for the *Commercial Appeal* in Memphis, agreed to take on the assignment. However, he suggested that AFN present five minutes of news and then ten minutes of trial coverage. Hayes accepted the change and then gave Burson a correspondent's accreditation with all the rights of other reporters covering the trial. He sent him to see General Paul Thompson, Chief of the Information and Education Division in General Eisenhower's Headquarters. There, Thompson briefed him about the importance of the assignment.<sup>(7)</sup>

Thompson told Burson that he considered coverage of the Nuernberg Trial a critical job.

"The responsibility is such that you're going to be, in a way, the official source of a lot of information to a lot of people. All Europe's going to get their information from

you and we want unemotional reporting." Since Burson was an enlisted man, Thompson instructed him to call headquarters directly if he had problems with accreditation or anything else. Furthermore, he said, "If anyone tries to coerce you, saying it is under the Army auspice and they don't like what you are reporting and they tell you to lay off of this, or don't do that, any attempt to censor you, you call me!"(8)

The American Government saw the Nuernberg Trial as politically sensitive with the Allies all playing off each other. Events needed to be reported as objectively as possible to establish a clear record of what had taken place. Burson went to Nuernberg and reported the trial for AFN until the middle of February, 1946. By then the proceedings were near the end and he was close to accumulating enough points to rotate back to the States. Because of his southern accent, AFN kept Burson off the air. Instead, an announcer with him read his written reports from a broadcast booth in the courthouse.

The program ran ten minutes in length and later five minutes after the trial settled into a regular routine. It travelled to the AFN station in Nuernberg and from there to Network headquarters in Frankfurt for distribution to all the affiliate stations.(9)

Burson's reports of the trial informed the American troops what had happened in Germany under Hitler and helped them understand why they were there as an occupying Army. The accurate coverage of Nuernberg also enhanced AFN's credibility as a news source that could be trusted. The commitment to on-the-spot and objective news reporting which Burson showed at Nuernberg, helped insure the survival of the Network.

Colonel Swain had no idea whether the European Command would maintain the Network when he officially became AFN commander on April 1, 1946. When he arrived, he found that a less-than-military demeanor existed. Swain was the first AFN chief who'd graduated from West Point. He intended to run the organization as a normal Army unit as long as it lasted.

Swain ordered the broadcaster soldiers to fall in for training every morning. When he did, station manager Neal advised the commander, "You should realize, Sir, that many of your troops work all night. We're an all-night, 'round-the-clock operation. We're going to have to do something drastic if you really insist that they fall out and have morning training."

That didn't deter Swain. Except for those who were on the air early in the morning, everyone would take part. Neal decided that he couldn't maintain the overnight operation, do the newscast and have the staff appear for morning exercise, too. So, he simply folded the 7:00 AM newscast - the favorite news program of the Theater Commander. The next morning, he led his men in

physical training and then went to his office.

Then he waited.

Soon came a call from the General wanting to know what'd happened to the news. That ended Colonel Swain's morning P.T.(10)

AFN had ready access to experienced radio and news people and Swain transferred them into his operation during the war. As long as the United States maintained a draft, experienced broadcasters were available. Civilian broadcasters were likewise willing to sign up for overseas duty, particularly after Europe began to recover from the wartime devastation.

With the smaller concentration of forces, staffing the stations with experienced personnel was always more of a problem for AFRS than it was for AFN. Military personnel were more often recruited because of the difficulty of hiring civilians for remote areas.

Unlike AFRS in the Pacific, Roy Neal, who also became the AFN Program Manager, noted, "We weren't a splintered operation. Once we had the network properly organized, I was constantly doing things out of Munich, Berlin, Nuernberg and other stations, and I was constantly going back to places such as Paris. We were operating on a theater-wide basis."

With technical resources available, including original magnetic tape recorders, AFN recorded live programs when the USO performed for the troops and then built shows around the recordings. Such creativity "also gave our network increased stature. We were those wonderful fellows who brought you Bob Hope when he first arrived in Europe.

#### AFRS IN THE FAR EAST

The troops' need for American entertainment programming was even higher on remote islands and in the Far East. There, loneliness and cultural differences made it more difficult for soldiers to adjust to overseas duty. The great distances between stations forced the small staffs to rely almost exclusively on the AFRS package for programming.

Far East postwar operations were much like that of the Mosquito Network and the Jungle Network. In February, 1945, the Jungle Network moved its headquarters from Hollandia, New Guinea to Manila where WVTR went on the air in March.

#### FAR EAST NETWORK ESTABLISHED

Once settled into the new facilities, Major Graf Boepple, OIC of the Manila station, decided that a name change for the Network was in order. He wrote a report to MacArthur's Headquarters for the April 1 to June 30, 1945, quarter, "With the extension of the Armed Forces Radio Service into populated areas of the Philippines," he

explained, "the former title 'Jungle Network' became a misnomer. That necessitated adopting a new name for this organization. Therefore on June 17, 1945, the former 'Jungle Network' officially became the 'Far East Network.' The chain of fourteen active broadcasting stations extended from Milne Bay, New Guinea to Manila, Philippine Islands."(12)

Boeppel procured eight mobile radio stations to be established following the planned invasion of the Japanese islands. He used the 400-watt transmitters from the stations-on-wheels that followed the troops throughout the island-hopping campaign. His staff built each self-contained, soundproofed studio on the frame of a two-and-a-half ton truck. A complete record library was included and augmented by transcriptions that came from AFRS headquarters.(13)

The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war sooner than expected, but AFRS was ready. When General Douglas MacArthur landed at Atsugi Airport on August 30, 1945, to arrange for the Japanese surrender, the AFRS staff from Manila was right behind him to establish broadcast operations. *Radio Daily* of September 7, 1945, reported that four mobile radio stations began operating in Japan and one in Korea during the first week of the occupation. *Broadcasting* reported on September 24, 1945, that FEN had network stations located in Tokyo, Nagasaki, Osaka, and Aomori.

Many claims exist regarding which station went on the air first in Japan. In his 1961 report entitled, *A Brief History of the Far East Network*, author Jordan Roscoe reached several conclusions:

"The first actual American troop broadcast in Japan originated from a portable transmitter operated by the 2nd Marine Division in Northern Kyush. It probably used the call letters WVTO, no later than September 1, 1945. The first Army radio station, WLKH, came from the 24th Infantry Division at Kure. It went on the air within the first 15 days of September. WVTQ, the first official AFRS station in permanent studios, went on the air September 12, from the Osaka headquarters of NHK, the Japanese national broadcasting system. The first use of the "Far East Network" designation took place on September 21, when WVTR went on the air in Tokyo. The first AFRS station to go on the air officially, WLKD in Sapporo, began broadcasting on September 22. Finally, WVTR in Tokyo and WVTQ in Osaka officially went on the air on September 23."(14)

To obtain use of Japanese facilities, Boepple met with representatives from the Army Signal Corps and the Japanese government shortly after he arrived in Tokyo from Manila. He explained that his Far East Network wanted to use one of the two powerful radio stations in Tokyo for sixteen-and-a-half hours each day. He would

use it along with the Number Two Japanese Network that included 10-KW outlets in Hiroshima, Nagoya, Yamaoto, Sapporo, Osaka, Senai and Tokyo. After two hours of discussion using interpreters, they reached an agreement. Following approval by the Japanese Ministry of Communications, FEN officially went on the air, on Sunday, September 23, at 6:30 am with the program day lasting until 11 PM.(15)

The Japanese could keep their 80-station Number One Network on the air subject to U.S. censorship. American music, news and sports soon permeated the airways anyway. FEN retained the Japanese engineering and technical staff. By January 1, 1947, the Far East Network was comprised of sixteen stations. Seven were in Japan and one each in Manila, Okinawa, Guam, Iwo Jima, Saipan, the Admiralty Islands, and Seoul, Chonju, and Pusan in Korea.

FEN remained a network in name only as the Tokyo outlet merely fed news and special events by shortwave. Then, in August 1947, the Tokyo flagship station began feeding programming to Osaka four hours a week by landlines. Each local station played the AFRS transcription package and produced its own programming.(16)

FEN stations dropped from a peak of thirty-nine FEN stations at the beginning of '46 to sixteen a year later, as bases consolidated and troops went home. Even so, FEN began to resemble a functioning radio network. In March, 1947, FEN held the first AFRS conference in the Far East. In attendance were radio officers from all I & E Sections and OICs of radio stations from all the major elements of the Far East Command (FEC). The attendees discussed the proposed GHQ FEC Circular 49, the first formal recognition of the Far East Network. Officially released on May 3, 1947, this circular set forth the mission, organization and functions of AFRS in the Far East Command. The Radio Officer, I & E Section, would direct AFRS under the supervision of the Information Officer, GHQ FEC.(17)

This evolution into a functioning network continued during 1948 with regularly scheduled station manager meetings. WVTR Tokyo started an AFRS school and "radio clinic" to improve FEN's on-the-air service. The station hired a "speech clinician" to travel to the stations and work with the announcers. By the next year, the clinician had become a "speech correctionalist" who taught speech fundamentals and distributed a pamphlet of speech aids.(18)

#### FIRST AFRS STATIONS IDENTIFIED BY LOCATION

By early 1949, FEN consisted of eleven stations located in Japan, Korea, Okinawa, the Philippine Islands and Marianna Islands. On September 15th, all FEN stations

stopped using call letters and began identifying themselves with the geographical location followed by "Armed Forces Radio Service." (19)

FEN, like AFN and the other AFRS operations, provided the theater and base commanders with an immediate means to reach their troops with information on all subjects. Edgar Tidwell, who served with the Jungle Network during the war, returned to the Far East in 1949 as Executive Officer of FEN and later as Network Commander. He maintained close liaison with the station managers through the semiannual meetings in Tokyo. He went into the field regularly with the Network Chief Engineer and Program Director to check station operations. When on the bases, he'd "always go in to see the Commander and ask how things were going and if he had any suggestions or ideas." Tidwell's meetings helped maintain good relationships and insured a quick response in times of crisis.

#### AFRS IN BERLIN

Nowhere was AFRS's value in an emergency better demonstrated than during the Berlin Air Lift of 1948. The Russian blockade of Berlin provided AFN with its biggest news challenge of the immediate postwar years. AFN newsmen flew back and forth to Berlin aboard the planes carrying supplies to the besieged city. They conducted spot interviews with the flight crews and talked with Berliners. When the blockade ended, AFN had newsmen at Helmstedt and Berlin to cover the first post-blockade train to move through East Germany.

The Russian challenge in Berlin changed the thinking of the Western Powers. From simply an occupying force, the Western military role became one of defense. West Germany became an ally rather than occupied territory. NATO was established, and with it the reality that American forces would remain in Europe.

During the Berlin crisis, AFN displayed a powerful influence not only on the morale of American troops, but on the civilian population who listened to the programming. The Berlin station was on the air twenty-four hours a day, providing both entertainment and a homing signal for the Air Lift pilots! AFN assured Berliners that the United States was present in their city, to stay.

Many believe the Berlin Crisis of 1948 saved the Network. While they may be overstating the case, it is true that the size of the American military had been decreasing since the end of World War II. The confrontation with the Soviet Union in Berlin led to a new build-up of the American military in Europe. That established a continuing need for AFN to provide entertainment, news, information and education. The Communist invasion of

South Korea furthered the build up of American Forces around the world. That guaranteed the continued need for AFRS.

#### AFRS IN KOREA

AFN's contribution during the Berlin Crisis demonstrated the important role which military radio fills in an emergency. FEN's response to the attack on South Korea in June, 1950, once again demonstrated the value of AFRS in a war setting. When North Korea crossed the 38th parallel, AFRS had only the station in Seoul. The FEN station at Fukuoka, Japan, beamed programming to American troops in the southern parts of South Korea. While the American Armed Forces fought to stem the invasion and then counter-attacked at Inchon, AFRS followed the troops.

As it had repeatedly done for a decade, armed forces broadcasting once again would prove its immeasurable value. In the crisis setting of the Far East, it would again provide news, information and entertainment to the troops and command alike.

But, not without a high price.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 16

- (1) Interview with Roy Neal, August 3, 1983.
- (2) Neal interview.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Interview with Harold Burson, March 7, 1984.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Quarterly Report, April 1 to 30, 1945, for Armed Forces Radio Section, Information and Education Detachment, AFPAC, Jordan Roscoe, *A Brief History of the Far East Network*, 1961. Cited hereafter as Roscoe.
- (13) Roscoe; Interview with Frank Tourtellotte, September 29, 1982.
- (14) Roscoe.
- (15) Press release, CHQ, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific, Sept 14, 1945; *New York Times*, Sept 25, 1945, p 46.
- (16) Roscoe.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid.

## THE FAR EAST NETWORK EXPANDS

Armed Forces Radio in Korea began after the end of World War II, when, FEN established station WVTP in Seoul for the American troops that landed to accept the Japanese surrender. FEN established other stations in Pusan, Chorju, and later, Kwangju. Like the stations in Japan, the Korean outlets operated independently with no network broadcast connections. When American troops withdrew from Korea in 1948, Armed Forces Radio also pulled out. By the end of the year, all stations except for Seoul had signed off the air. On June 30, 1949, FEN transferred the Seoul station to the Korea Military Advisory Group, and WVTP ceased to be considered part of the Far East Network.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38th Parallel and attacked the South Korean capital. Immediately, WVTP began broadcasting evacuation instructions to American personnel. Before the North Korean capture of the city, the station moved to Taegu and then, on July 31, farther south to Pusan. As the Pusan perimeter shrank, the station went off the air and evacuated to Japan. FEN continued to broadcast programs during this period from its Fukuoka transmitter.

To cover the fighting itself, FEN sent a correspondent to the perimeter armed with a .45 automatic and a tape recorder. He joined the 24th Infantry Division's 19th Regiment north of Taejon. When Taejon fell to the North Koreans, the correspondent retreated to Tokyo, but after a week returned to the peninsula. There he joined the 1st Cavalry Division north of Taegu with whom he remained until he was wounded and evacuated to Japan. His vivid memories accented his broadcast reports. One time, he recalled, "I looked out of the courtyard and saw some tanks approaching. Jubilantly, I said to a soldier next to me, 'Here come our tanks!' He stared at me matter-of-factly. 'We ain't got no tanks.' was the laconic reply. I don't think I ever felt so lost!"

Back in Japan at General Headquarters, military commanders were planning for the Inchon landing. They decided that a permanent AFRS station should be reestablished in Seoul as soon as they recaptured the city. The command issued instructions to the Headquarters, Japan Logistical Command, to help acquire the needed equipment. Major Edgar Tidwell, FEN's executive officer, immediately began locating the equipment and obtaining

personnel from AFRS stations throughout Japan. By September 20, 1st Lieutenant Albert Jones, Officer in Charge of the new station, Francis X. Crosby, a civilian radio engineer, and seven enlisted men were in Yokohama. So, too, were an undetermined number of crates of equipment.

### THE ARMED FORCES KOREAN NETWORK

On September 27, MacArthur's Headquarters issued General Order #84, which officially created AFKN. The next day, Crosby flew with Sergeant Allen Larkin and Corporal Lawrence Butcher into Kimpo Air Field. There, they'd seek to find a studio and make arrangements for the arrival of the equipment and staff. The rest of the staff left Yokohama on Sunday, October 1, flying first to Ashiya and then to Kimpo, arriving at 10 PM. From there they made their way into Seoul to the American Embassy, where Crosby located the original WVTP studio.

Although the retreating North Koreans exploded two bombs in the basement, the soundproofed studios survived in good condition. Typical of AFRS broadcasters, the nine men worked for forty-eight hours straight and got the station back on the air on October 4. Although they'd brought most of the equipment with them, small items, like screwdrivers, didn't arrive. Larkin recalled, "We used fingernail files, nail clippers, mess gear, and everything else imaginable to get things in operation. We made it, somehow!"

At 7:00 AM Wednesday morning, an American announced, "Good Morning, this is Armed Forces Radio in Seoul, broadcasting on 610-kilocycles. We now bring you the news..."

The station didn't stay on the air long. Crosby'd strung the antenna up the side of the eight-story Embassy building and across the street up a smoke stack atop a building 30-feet away. A Korean clearing the top floor of the Embassy building threw some trash out the window, the antenna came down, and the station went off the air. Crosby went up the eight flights, fixed the antenna and the station went back on.

A few minutes later, a chair flew out one of the windows, and down went the antenna once more. Crosby fixed the antenna again, but when it happened a third time, he then resorted to more drastic means. He posted himself on the street with a carbine. A warning shot into the air finally convinced the Koreans that the area was not a public dump, and AFRS Seoul was on the air for good!(1)

From the beginning, AFRS Seoul broadcast twenty-one hours a day, three hours longer than the FEN stations. The extra programming came from a record request show "Rice Paddy Ranger," which ran from Midnight to 3:00 AM. With its own short-wave receiver, the station picked

up news broadcasts directly from AFRS Los Angeles and shortwave programs from Japan. Besides the news and sports, the station received the regular AFRS transcription package.

For their own music shows, the disc jockeys relied on the AFRS record library, which contained more than 100,000 musical selections ranging from country to classical to the top ten. The station also broadcast several of the popular FEN shows, including "Sports Parade" and "Four O'Clock Jamboree."(2)

Lieutenant Albert Jones relied on a staff of eight enlisted men and Francis Crosby, while Koreans who worked at WVTP during the occupation years did the maintenance chores. At first, the troops seemed hesitant to send in their requests, but within a month of going on the air, the station's mail had grown considerably. Their tastes were much the same as radio listeners all over the world. Popular music held the top spot, country music second, commercial network variety shows were third and mystery programs fourth.(3)

With its 250-watt transmitter, AFRS Seoul reached an audience within a 25-mile radius of the city. Programming for the rest of South Korea came from the FEN shortwave transmitter in Fukuoka. In the early days of the war, the network leased a 10,000-watt transmitter from the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation and beamed programs to the first American units thrown into battle. FEN soon moved one of its transmitters from Saga to Fukuoka and returned the leased transmitter to its owners. The new one was strong enough to be heard as far north as Taejon. Even the two stations together could not adequately cover all parts of Korea. More American and UN forces poured into the country and the Allies began moving north.(4)

#### AFRS UNDER THE BOMBS

Monitoring the course of the fighting from Japan, Major Tidwell built a mobile station modeled after those built during World War II. Roscoe Phillips found an old ordnance van in which he built a studio, including a BC-610 radio transmitter. When the technicians completed the station, dubbed "The Monster," they airlifted it to Kimpo. From there, they took it to Seoul to replace the Embassy studios.(5) Once again, AFRS' creativity in scrounging brought "a little bit of home" to the troops.

The makeshift station had a short stay. After driving UN forces out of North Korea, the Chinese and North Koreans moved back across the 38th parallel and toward the South Korean capital. As they entered the city's northern suburbs, the "Monster" roared out the southern end after signing off: "We don't know where we'll be next, and nobody else does either. That's why we're called the 'Kilroy' station." The mobile station moved

south with the UN forces and settled permanently in Taegu, where it became known as "Radio Kilroy."

By then, other stations on wheels were working in the field. AFKN became known as the "Network on Wheels."

As the UN forces began to move North again during the Spring of 1951, one of the vans advanced with the troops. Reaching Seoul in May, the staff transferred operations to a studio it set up in the Bando Hotel. The "permanent" facility lasted about two hours before gunfire and bomb forced the station back to its van! While the station stayed in the Seoul area, its initial experience in the capital produced its name, "Vagabond."

When the fighting moved beyond Seoul, another unit, nicknamed "Troubadour," operated north of the 38th parallel with the X Corps. In the Kumwha sector, AFKN established Radio "Gypsy," a most fitting name with the station continuously on the move. In June, 1951, it was at Chunchon; four months later, at Hwachan.

In the South, "Homesteader" began operations at Pusan on August 25 and became the only station to acquire a permanent home during the war.

Movement became the byword for the "Network on Wheels." Each of the mobile units had a 250-watt transmitter, a studio, program materials, AFRS transcriptions and the ability to put on occasional live shows. As the intensity of the war increased, AFKN placed more stations in the field. By November, 1952, "Rambler" was in the Chunchon area, "Nomad" was with I Corps and "Mercury" was on the Air Force base at Kunsan. All of them were providing the UN forces with entertainment, news and information.

Besides providing the regular programming, the stations also raised thousands of dollars for various charities. The "Vagabond" 24-hour drive for crippled Korean children, in September, 1952, was typical of the fund-raising marathons the local stations originated.

Contributions came from bunkers, tents and barracks. A group of Marines paid \$400 to hear the "Marine Hymn," another \$100 to keep the "Artillery Song" off the air. In turn, the artillery men quickly pledged \$155 for their song. The Army then paid to have "Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better," "Baby Face," and "Too Young" dedicated to the Marines. The Leathernecks finally dedicated "I Surrender, Dear" to the Army, ending the rivalry.

The fund-raiser closed with "I'll be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal You," which the station dedicated to the Communist General Nam Il.

Such shows generated that famous doughboy humor that has always existed side by side with the grim realities of combat. Yet, the AFKN outlets never lost sight of their wartime mission. One of the troops' favorite programs was "Mail From Home," which featured songs dedicated

to individual soldiers.

The sounds of combat at times intruded upon the live shows that the stations originated. A Christmas program, which "Radio Vagabond" recorded in December, 1952, featured the Wolfhound Regimental Choir and three chaplains addressing their congregations. Describing the recording session, the station's program director recalled, "We could hear the artillery in the background. I'll bet it's the only recording on earth of a chaplain wishing his men 'Peace on Earth' followed by a 60mm shell blast!"

AFKN covered the war itself with "News Front, Far East," in a joint venture with FEN. Reporters with portable tape recorders went wherever the fighting took place. They'd cover all phases of the conflict - a mile behind enemy lines on a combat patrol and over enemy targets in Air Force planes. They even covered such major operations as "Trojan Horse," which pushed thousands of Communist troops out of position during the winter of 1951-52. Coverage also included VIP visits, the armistice talks, prisoner exchanges, and finally, the truce agreement itself.

#### FIRST STATION ON A MARINE BASE

As time passed, the network continued to grow. They added "Radio Meteor" in 1953, the first station to be located on a Marine base in Korea. It served the First Marine Air Wing at Pohang. "Meteor" was the ninth station in the network, of which seven operated from mobile units and two broadcast from permanent facilities. Given the multinational nature of the United Nations Command, the AFKN stations had a varied audience. They tried to provide service to all. Newscasts and disc jockey shows were broadcast in French, Dutch, Korean, Flemish, Turkish, Greek, two dialects of Spanish. There were actually two versions of English. One was for the Americans and one for the Commonwealth troops of Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Following the Armistice on July 27, 1953, AFKN went through a period of transition from the "Network on Wheels" to permanently established stations. In April, 1954, "Vagabond" opened permanent studios on Vagabond Hill in Seoul. "Radio Comet" went on the air in July, 1954, with studios at Osan Air Force Base. AFKN inactivated "Meteor," "Nomad," "Rambler" and "Troubadour." "Radio Gypsy" moved to Camp St. Barbara in Kuma-ri.

FEN worked closely with AFKN, providing logistical support, equipment and programming. All newscasts came from FEN, Tokyo to each AFKN station via short-wave. In 1956, FEN Headquarters established the first teletype service to AFKN, Seoul. Using the combined resources of commercial wire services and its own newscenter, AFKN began to originate all of its own news

programming from Seoul.

AFKN began from scratch in October, 1950, under the worst of wartime conditions. By 1957, AFKN had become an independent network providing complete programming service to all American Armed Forces stationed in South Korea. Not bad!

#### FAR EAST NETWORK EXPANDS AND REORGANIZES

Meanwhile, FEN continued to evolve into a network operation in name and practice. After the closing of AFRS Saipan on April 1, 1950, FEN consisted of nine stations and five relay transmitters. Most of the stations were on the air eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. Of the 1,267 hours of programs broadcast each week, almost fifty percent came from the FEN production department or from the individual local station staffs. The other half originated from the weekly AFRS transcription package from AFRS, Los Angeles.

During 1952, the locally-produced programming ranged over a wide spectrum.(6) From Kyush, Army Corporal Fred "Fearless" Forgette aired everything from traffic safety to blood bank contributions with wit, personality and originality. From Osaka, Army Sergeant Tod "Cowboy" Clems put "Sagebrush Symphony" on the air. He enticed even hillbilly haters to his program. From Sendai, Army Master Sergeant Johnny Baker broadcast "Stories of Japan" for some six years. He became as much a part of the serviceman's experience in Japan as the hot baths and Mt. Fuji.

The core of FEN programming came out of the Headquarters in Tokyo. One of the most popular programs began in August, 1952. Co-hosted by former U.S. Navy language instructor John Sato and his friend, Army Corporal Dan Levy, the five-minute program soon had listeners greeting each other in Japanese. During this same period, Navy Journalist Ben Oldag, possibly the most versatile voice ever to broadcast over FEN, showed that the right person could do country or long-hair classical music. He could even introduce church services, all with appropriate style and equal aplomb.

Entertainment aside, FEN probably offered its greatest appeal and served its mission best through its news department. The weekly, thirty-minute documentary "News From Far East" covered significant events with on-the-spot reporting.

The Network underwent an administrative reorganization in 1951 when Major Edgar Tidwell replaced Major Jean Wood as Theater Radio Officer. On September 1, 1951, as a result of G.O. 58, Headquarters and Service Command, Far East Command, they discontinued the six separate AFRS Army units in Japan. They also abolished the position of Theater Radio Officer. Major Tidwell

became the Chief of the 8213th A.U. Far East Network Japan, which organized all radio operations under its command.

AFKN became the 8212th A.U. and FEN Okinawa became the 8104th A.U. The Information Officer of the GHQ FEC staff supervised all three of these Army units.

Under this arrangement, FEN received supply support from the depot at Camp Zama, Japan, with engineering and production support coming directly from FEN headquarters in Tokyo.

With the new organization in place, FEN began a period of stability. It settled into its task of providing service to American Forces who were now "guests" in a free and no longer occupied Japan. Meanwhile, it lent support to other AFRS operations in Korea, Okinawa, and the Philippines. During 1952, FEN opened two new stations. One started in August at Miho on the southwest coast of Honshu. A second started in October on the U.S. Marine Corps Air Facility at Iwakuni, 20 miles from Hiroshima. These new stations brought the number of FEN outlets to eight. Also during the year, FEC extended landlines from Tokyo through Nagoya and Iwakuni, to the Kyushu complex and also north to Sendai, turning FEN into a real radio network.

The change in the status of American Forces in Japan from an occupying Army to "guest" status had a profound impact on FEN. Until 1953, the network had used transmitter and studio facilities leased from Japanese radio. Under the new politics, this no longer remained feasible, so FEN constructed studio facilities for all its stations on military bases. By September 1953, FEN housed all outlets in their-own buildings. This required some changes in station locations and the addition of relay transmitters in some areas.

The Kyushu station moved to Itazuke Air Base near Fukuoka. The Osaka-Nagoya station moved to the Magoya-Jo housing area, and Sendai to the Camp Sendai housing area. FEN Tokyo moved to new studio buildings at South Camp Drake, with the transmitter built at Momoto Village housing area. In the summer of 1954,

FEN opened a station at Niigata, although its operation didn't receive final authorization until the next year.

With Niigata on the air, FEN now had nineteen outlets -- nine stations and ten relay transmitters. FEN Iwo Jima closed in April, 1953, but FEN Okinawa continued operations, giving the network a total of twenty outlets, the largest at any time during FEN's history. One station reopened on Iwo Jima in 1954, but without official sanction.

The latter 1950s witnessed a decline in the number of outlets as the United States military consolidated and phased out its facilities.

FEN, like AFKN, continued the stalwart tradition of providing entertainment, information and news to the American defense personnel wherever they found themselves stationed in the Far East.

Soon, they'd add pictures to the sound.

## NOTES - CHAPTER 17

- (1) *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Oct. 18, 1950, page 2; Interview with Edgar Tidwell, May 26, 1983; undated AFKN histories, 1950s and 1960s. *Both Stars and Stripes and the network histories contain significant, overt errors on dates, times and sequence of events. For example, Stars and Stripes gives the time of the first broadcast at 7:00 AM, while several of the histories give it as 12:41. One even says the 4th was a Sunday. The chronology uses Stars and Stripes as the primary source, given the closeness of the story to the events recounted.*
- (2) Sergeant First Class, Doug Dubois, "Radio at War," *Stars and Stripes*, Nov. 18, 1950, p 7.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Tidwell interview; AFKN histories.
- (6) The material for the following section comes primarily from Roscoe's "Brief History of the Far East Network."

## AIR FORCE BEGINS TELEVISION OPERATIONS

The Korean Conflict and the Cold War of the 1950s insured that Armed Forces Radio would continue as a viable organization. During this period, AFRS faced the same challenge to its operations and programming as did commercial radio throughout the United States. By the end of the Korean Conflict, television brought about the end of network radio's monopoly on entertainment programming. Local radio stations had to restructure their broadcast day. In most instances, this meant a move to an all-music format of either popular, jazz, big band, country and western, classic, or some combination format.

At AFRS Headquarters, the programming staff faced the same challenge in replacing network entertainment programming in the transcription package it distributed. The need to fill the weekly entertainment package became a continuing concern. The AFRS solutions resembled those developed by commercial outlets, including increased disc jockey shows, added special informational features, and more sports from the commercial network radio operations.

AFRS took two directions in providing music shows sent out in the transcription package: First, they recorded local disc jockey programs, usually from the Los Angeles area. Information spots replaced commercials on these programs, sent out on disks. Second, AFRS increased the number of in-house produced radio shows, usually hosted by other disc jockeys under contract with AFRS. The latter shows had the advantages of being directed specifically to the military audience. They did not require the decommercializing step. Finally, AFRS increased the size of the local music libraries so that outlets had access to a sufficient number of records to support their locally produced disc jockey shows.

### THE AIR FORCE PIONEERS

Despite the mission of bringing to the troops "a little bit of home," AFRS headquarters did not respond to the sudden explosion of television. No initiatives were made at AFRS to provide TV to American Forces overseas. Television would start as a solution for a morale problem in the Strategic Air Command.

In early 1947, General Curtis LeMay received a recommendation from his own staff that his command build small television stations to boost morale at isolated SAC

bases. As television grew, LeMay explored the subject with his friend Arthur Godfrey. The famous personality was a car racing and hunting companion. He agreed that an economical, small television station could be developed for use in remote areas. Planners also saw the usefulness of television in providing information and education. Since television was just getting off the ground commercially, the Air Force confined its interest to memos, which anticipated future use.(1)

Meanwhile, the advent of the Cold War brought about vast changes within the military. From the initial headlong demobilization at the close of World War II, the United States began to rearm in response to Soviet actions in Central Europe. The Army, Navy and the new, separate Air Force started to deploy forces in almost as many remote overseas locations as during the war.

The new peacetime conditions would inevitably require a military television network, just as the need during the WWII led to the development of Armed Forces Radio. One significant difference existed. With no war, servicemen found less urgency in their work. The absence of combat increased interest in off-duty activities and a desire for the same things troops had back in the United States. The narrow range of entertainment options at most overseas Armed Forces bases created boredom and prompted the military to provide significant recreational activities.

The need for these activities received an additional emphasis. In an era of rapid technological advances, the Services were embarking upon a program to retain trained men and women for careers in the military. With the increase in military careers came an increase in the number of military families on military bases both in the United States and abroad. Wherever they found themselves, these military families as well as and the unmarried serviceman or woman, came to expect normal American entertainment. More and more, that meant commercial television.

By the end of the Korean Conflict, TV had ceased to be a novelty in the United States. Most people considered TV a normal household appliance. To deprive service men and women of such an accustomed source of entertainment would affect morale, enlistments and retention of trained personnel. This problem particularly affected the Strategic Air Command. It had both a large number of remote facilities and a specific need for highly skilled personnel to maintain its sophisticated equipment. As a result, Curtis LeMay redoubled his efforts to provide television to his men. By early 1953, the Air Force was developing plans to put a low-power television prototype station on the air.

SAC ultimately considered two possible locations for the prototype station, Rapid City Air Force Base in South

**Dakota and Limestone Air Force Base in northern Maine.** Limestone was far from any commercial television station signal. Therefore, an Air Force TV station not be a competition for service. Also, there were no with which it might compete. No immediate plans existed for a civilian station in the area, which might force an early termination of the experiment. SAC did, however, have to obtain FCC approval of the project. To do so, SAC had to agree that if a commercial station began in the area, the military TV station would go off the air. It also promised that the television transmitter would be limited to ten watts of power.

The location permitted easy access for technicians and the delivery of parts that a prototype station would require if problems developed during the shakedown period. The continental U.S. site also eased observation of the broadcast activities and evaluation of its operation. Finally, the station provided an indirect benefit by giving the Air Force the opportunity to provide a service to the local population.

For LeMay's purposes, Limestone provided a good case study for dealing with many of the problems facing SAC. The base had an inordinately large military population compared to the number of civilians in the region. Limestone AFB had a population of 15,000 servicemen and their dependents. In contrast, the town of Limestone had a population of 864, while Caribou, ten miles away, had 4,500. Aroostock County, while large area-wise, had only 96,000. More important, the region around Limestone lacked a variety of recreational facilities for base personnel. In addition the local population was not on particularly good terms with the airbase. The rigorous winters, unpleasant for both the military personnel and their dependents, didn't help. And, the atmospheric and mineral nature of the area made radio reception poor. These local problems, when combined with SAC's operational requirements, created morale problems for dependents. The results were a high rate of AWOL and divorce.

Once the Air Force selected Limestone, it moved ahead rapidly to get the station on the air before Christmas. To do so, it had to solve two problems. First, acquire and set up the television equipment. Second, find and arrange for delivery of program material.

SAC gave the job of acquiring equipment to its Communications and Electronics Division. Lieutenant Colonel P.L. Moen, the Deputy Chief of the division, became the SAC Technical Project Officer. Moen made several unproductive inquiries to manufacturers. Then, with the help of General LeMay, he contacted David Sarnoff, President of RCA. After Moen informed him of the problem, Sarnoff referred him to the company's Camden, New Jersey plant for assistance.

On August 13, two RCA representatives did an on-the-spot survey of the Limestone facilities. They would determine the precise location for the studio and the type of equipment that they would need. The planners determined that space on top of the hospital offered the best location for the station and antenna.

With the site selection completed, the RCA representatives returned to Camden with the mission of drawing up television studio plans. The plans considered the limitations of space and money, but provided for the greatest versatility for immediate use and future expansion. To fulfill these goals, RCA produced three plans, one costing \$18,000, one \$24,000, and one \$28,000. None provided for "live" in-house production of programs. SAC decided to purchase the \$28,000 package with modifications that provided for "live" telecasting and for ancillary equipment for a greater scope of production activity. Financing for the studio came from SAC's Welfare Funds. The setup included a videcon camera chain, a 16mm projector, monitoring equipment, synchronizing generator, other necessary electronic equipment and an eight-watt transmitter. The studio received a turntable and an RCA tape recorder to play fill music.

While SAC and RCA were solving the equipment problems, the Air Force began efforts to provide programming. Despite the obvious expertise of AFRS in obtaining program material, SAC didn't approach the Los Angeles headquarters for help. They chose instead to go directly to the major networks in New York. The Chief, Procurement and Projects Branch, Personnel Services Division, SAC assumed the job of procurement. He arranged a meeting with representatives from the major television networks. The meeting produced an agreement that the Procurement and Projects Branch would obtain clearances for network productions. To do this, the staff would contact sponsors, agencies, networks and other parties to acquire rights to use the shows. The office also would handle any union clearances that might be necessary. The Army and Air Force Motion Picture Service would act as courier for receiving and shipping of films from New York to Limestone.

To provide an official sanction for the budding new medium, the Department of Defense issued a memorandum on October 28, 1953. Signed by Dr. John Hannah, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Personnel, it formally established an Armed Forces television activity. It stated that the Office of Armed Forces Information and Education had the responsibility for plans and policy for radio, motion pictures and publications.

"Television potentially provides an additional medium of communication capable of exerting a strong, favorable influence on the information and education program of the Armed Forces," the DoD memorandum said.

"It will be appreciated if the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force will coordinate all television use with the Office of Armed Forces Information and Education," it continued. "OAFIE is responsible for the development and supervision of Armed Forces information and education television plans and policy."

In turn, OAFIE issued DoD Directive 5000.4, which set forth the objectives of Armed Forces Television. It called for a "balanced fare of information and education programs" to be furnished to all Armed Forces Radio and Television stations. The programs were to be written or chosen, produced and distributed "based on the accomplishment of the information and education objective. That is, to foster in the serviceman attitudes conducive to military efficiency, the mission of the Armed Forces, American democratic principles and an increasing knowledge of national and international affairs."

Clearances for the use of the various shows started to arrive in October and November as work progressed on the 10-foot by 13-foot studio. The station would go on the air Christmas Day. The base Information Services Officer knew one man who had some radio announcing experience and a working knowledge of radio station procedures. As a result, he became program director with the ISO acting initially as station manager. The maintenance and engineering personnel came under the supervision of an officer who'd volunteered his services after his regular duty hours. The station received four men assigned on a permanent basis, two from the Armament and Electronics Squadron and two from the Communications Section. None of the men had television experience, but the maintenance officer had significant experience in radio. One of the enlisted men worked at one time with the AFRS. The other three men were radio, radar and communications equipment mechanics.

The equipment, minus the transmitter, antenna and turntable arrived on December 21. The transmitter reached Limestone and the 23rd and the staff began to set up the equipment. That evening, an engineer from RCA arrived to help check out the system. Everyone worked until four O'clock the next afternoon. Although not in perfect order and lacking an antenna, the station went on the air on the target date. The staff used a makeshift set-up that transmitted a good picture but somewhat inferior audio signal. It was not until February 10, 1954, that they finally installed the proper antenna.

Although the film for the first day's broadcasting didn't arrive until December 24, the Christmas day inaugural of military broadcasting went off with few difficulties. Programming began with the sign-on and test pattern at 5:45 PM. News aired at 6:00. "Littlest Angel" followed, then "Rootie Kazootie," "Child of

Bethlehem," "Guiding Star," "You Can Change the World," "Jamie," "U.S. Steel Hour," and "Comeback Story." News at 8:00 PM closed the broadcast day. Because of the lack of programming, the station initially broadcast only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday with the four-hour evening schedule. As the weeks passed, the schedule expanded as the commercial networks began to supply more and more material. The station supplemented that with films from the Air Force Film Library and from the Allied Artists and Republic Pictures motion picture companies.

Soon, the station was able to schedule between thirty-three and forty hours a week of filmed shows that it supplemented with three "live" shows. The "Chaplain Hour" was a fifteen-minute talk ("hour" sounded better than "quarter-hour") delivered every Sunday by one of the base Chaplains or a visiting clergyman. The second was a weekly news summary, prepared and presented by an officer from Wing intelligence. The third, "LAFB Personalities," attempted to present interesting people from the base who were entertaining and had something of interest to offer. These included a hypnotist, a fire-eater and an airman who did three dimensional paintings. By the end of January, the station was also doing three live news shows a day.

Despite the limited transmission equipment and the bare-bones nature of the studio, the Limestone station remained on the air with only a one-and-a-half hour interruption. That was to fix the synchronizing generator. On February 10, operations stopped for one day to install the new antenna. After the installation, the airmen assigned to the station did all the maintenance and engineering. Given the conditions under which they had to work and their initial lack of experience in television, their "ingenuity and resourcefulness was amazing to the point of disbelief." (2) Again, such is the legacy of armed forces broadcasting.

Shortly after the station went on the air, Limestone Air Force Base had its name changed to Loring and SAC began to assign additional personnel to the television operation. John Bradley, a Sergeant who'd been doing public relations work for General LeMay, arrived at the station soon after it went on the air. He recalled that Maine "is not really one of the great places in the world to be stationed." That was particularly true in the winter and even more so for the television staff. The studio atop the hospital at Loring it was inside a structure built of metal I-beams and enclosed with corrugated metal. It housed mainly elevator equipment and had no insulation or heating.(3)

In the summer, the men had to work half-naked because of the temperatures. Winter was worse, and it "presented some really interesting problems. We always

had to operate with parkas and frequently with gloves on, which we removed solely for adjusting and changing film."

The men soon found a more mundane problem. The television equipment was initially on the same electrical line as the hospital elevator. Every time someone used the lift, it caused a drop in power creating problems with the broadcast signal. The staff solved this by hooking up to a separate power source.(4)

Despite working without any backup equipment in case of breakdowns, the station at Loring accomplished everything which General LeMay had hoped. Major Peter Bekker wrote *A Report on the Morale Effectiveness of AFL-TV*, in January, 1956. It summarized the changes that had occurred during the first two years the station was on the air. In early 1954, shortly after the broadcast operation began, the AWOL rate at Loring was 20 per 1,000 men. By the beginning of 1955, the rate had fallen to 2.5 per 1,000. From January to June, 1955, the period that normally had the highest AWOL rate, the base maintained a rate of 2 men per 1,000. In early 1954, the base had a rate of 22 summary courts per month. By the end of the year, they conducted 4 or 5 per month and during 1955, the rate dropped to 1 or 2 per month. For SAC, the important figures had to do with reenlistments. From no reenlistments at all in the early months of 1954, the number rose to 12 by the end of the year. By March, 1955, the rate had risen to 18 per month.(5)

Major Bekker's *Report* continued, "In the field of human reaction, we can build an even more solid case for AFL-TV. Fan letters for our various live shows average sixty a week. This figure jumps considerably for special presentations. The United Fund drive used AFL-TV quite effectively last year and it will use it again this year to encourage donations." In addition, the Dependents Assistance Program, which Bekker called "a must on every SAC installation," rose to ninety-percent participation, "solely through the television programming information. At this point, Loring has one of the most effective dependent's assistance programs in SAC." While acknowledging that the letters may not prove conclusive in themselves, Bekker believed that they provided "one of the truest guides. They demonstrate sincere appreciation for the efforts of the station."(6)

Although SAC had initiated the move to television, other commands in the Air Force observed the significant impact of TV. They initiated efforts to bring television overseas. The Commander of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) took action early in 1954 to install TV stations in all isolated bases under MATS operational control. After surveying locations, MATS obtained approval from the television networks to extend the original Limestone agreements. They negotiated with the

Portuguese Government and received permission to install a station in the Azores. Station CSL-TV began at Lajes Field, in the Azores, on October 17, 1954. The next station to go on the air was AJG-TV at Wheelus Field, Tripoli, on December 22, 1954.

In the meantime, the Department of Defense established the Television Section of the Information Branch, Office of Armed Forces Information and Education in February, 1954.

#### AFRTS ESTABLISHED

OAFIE issued a letter on April 21, 1954, which changed the name of AFRS to Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS). On September 14, the Television Section became the Television Branch, Information Division. On October 29, the Office issued DoD Instruction 5120.2. It was to govern all Armed Forces television operations.

As set forth in this original Instruction, the mission of Armed Forces Television Service was much like radio. It was "to provide United States Armed Forces personnel overseas, and in isolated areas where commercial programs are not available, television programs for information, education and entertainment."

AFRTS assumed the responsibility for providing programming to the growing number of stations, but battles still had to be fought. The initial shows which Limestone received had advertising included. They made no effort to decommercialize them. This practice continued during the early months of the station's operations, despite AFRTS' objections as soon as it became involved. On September 23, 1954, Commander E. F. Hutchins, USN, then OIC in the AFRTS Headquarters, sent a memorandum to General Harland Hartness, the Director of OAFIE. He responded to Hartness's statement that the policy of not decommercializing television programs "would be inescapable." The networks had been insisting on keeping advertisements in the shows they were furnishing. Hutchins noted, "If we are to accept this as a firm basis for our expansion into television, I'm afraid we'll, of necessity, find ourselves forced into an indefensible position. In other words, what is the difference between Jack Benny on AM or TV? Why is it acceptable to hear and see the Lucky Strike Commercial on an Armed Forces Television Station, but not on its radio counterpart?"

Decommercializing the television programs would have to be done for the same reasons that the AFRS shipped programs during the war without advertisements. All concerned parties agreed. AFRTS developed the techniques needed to edit out advertisements. What AFRTS didn't do was enter into the production of its own entertainment television programs. The cost would have been prohibitive.

The mission of AFRTS remained the same as that of

AFRS, to provide the same programming the service men and women in the field had watched back home. That is, "a little bit of home."

As a result, the television side of the AFRTS operations in Los Angeles always remained a distribution activity rather than a creative production center. The creativity that did develop within the organization did so at the local level where the staffs did news and special live programs. Limits imposed by budgets, equipment and available staff generally precluded the production of major programs.

However, since the arrival of live satellite delivered programming a new form of creativity has developed at the AFRTS Broadcast Center. The acquisition and scheduling of live TV programming will form the core of future programming to satisfy the needs of America's service men and women. Television in the '80s has made the operation in Los Angeles a true broadcast facility.

The success with which AFRTS has fulfilled its television mission has continued to this day. It's all a tradition

begun in primitive facilities by a small group of airmen at Limestone Air Force Base in 1953.

"..By airmen, for airmen." And, the story continues.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 18

- (1) Interview with John Bradley, March 18, 1984. Also, Major James J. Weldon, Information Services Officer, Headquarters 42nd Air Base Group, OIC, "A.F.T.V. Station, Limestone AFB, Maine - Final Report", [n.d. 1956]. Cited hereafter as Weldon. Also, Lieutenant Colonel M. Williamson, November 3, 1955.
- (2) Weldon.
- (3) Bradley interview, March 28, 1984.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.

## ARMED FORCES RADIO BEGINS TELEVISION SERVICE

MATS put a station on the air at Keflavik, Iceland, on March 1, 1955. It put another on-the-air at Kindley AFB, Bermuda, four months later. In doing so, it became the first Air Force command to bring television to all its remote bases. Television continued to expand. The U. S. Air Force added a station at Dhahran in Saudi Arabia. (The latter was very important during the Persian Gulf War of 1991.) In July, the Air Force organized the first and only Radio and Television Squadron in the Armed Forces at Headquarters USAFE, Wiesbaden, Germany. The 7122nd Support Squadron (AFRS-TV) initially supervised five radio stations and the TV stations at Wheeler Field and Dhahran. It planned to expand the television operation to eleven bases.

While the Squadron had supervisory control over the stations, a true network never evolved. Each outlet operated independently. The Squadron's stations in Germany at Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Bitburg and at Landstuhl did not compete with AFN. Because AFN made no effort to add television to its operation until the mid-1970s. The Squadron's primary job was supplying each outlet with kinescopes of the top entertainment shows. The commercial networks supplied programming to the Air Force free of charge. Resource limitations at each station allowed only news, weather, sports, personality interviews and the chaplain's half-hour on Sundays to be locally produced.

From the beginning, the Air Force in Europe faced a problem in selecting and training personnel to man the television stations. The Air Force had no Specialty Code (job description) for television personnel. So, the Squadron recruited radar and radio specialists to man its operations. On occasion, they'd find personnel who had civilian television experience from bases throughout USAFE. With the help of the Video Production Squadron, the 7122nd established a training program at Wheeler Field. There, technicians became certified as qualified in TV maintenance or production.

To provide guidance for its TV operations, the Office of Armed Forces Information and Education published a set of procedures for establishing or shutting down television outlets. The size of the potential audience was not to determine whether a base should have a station. Instead, a commander had to justify the need for a station

in his area. According to DoD Instruction 5120.2, an outlet could be established "in commands where English language television facilities are nonexistent or are inadequate."

The local commander had to estimate the number of personnel that'd benefit from the facility. He'd also assign the local unit that would exercise control. He'd determine its physical location, personnel requirements and budgetary support. The request also had to show the availability of a television frequency in the area and the status of negotiations for its use with the host government. The proposed outlet was not to interfere with domestic or foreign stations and was not to restrict or preclude use of any frequency by a licensed station. Finally, the station was not to compete for U.S. military listeners in the area. Some of these restrictions still hold true today.

Television finally came to network level operations when AFKN began to broadcast filmed shows in Seoul on September 15, 1957. Live programming began on January 4, 1959. The first outlet opened on March 1 at Camp Kaiser and had only a film broadcast capacity. So did later ones at Kunsan Air Base, which began operation in July, 1963, and at Taegu, which went on the air that Christmas.

In 1964, the Seoul station consolidated its broadcast operations. It moved its TV transmitter from Namsan Hill to Hill 343 in the Yongsan Compound. Then it combined radio and television facilities in the one location. During the year, AFKN-TV improved its picture quality by replacing its old cameras with modern Image-Orthicon cameras and improving the studio lighting system. AFKN also began plans to link all the outlet television stations with the network headquarters by microwave.

By the end of '65, Seoul could originate all programming in a true network style. Through a complex of microwave relays and strategically-placed repeater transmitters, they reached as far south as Taegu. The next year, they completed the link to Pusan. For coverage outside the studios, AFKN built a mobile van. They used it to broadcast such events as Bob Hope's Christmas show, sports events, military ceremonies, USO shows and chapel services. This provided AFKN with more of a "feel" of commercial radio and television. In addition, AFKN-TV became the first affiliate of AFRTS to receive a video tape recorder for studio operation.

During the year, the network put the van to good use, covering a meeting of the Military Armistice Commission at Panmunjom. Through a window, an AFKN camera recorded an angry exchange between the two sides while Communist guards looked on. Then, in October, the network geared up to cover President Johnson's visit to Korea. AFKN Radio and TV covered President and Mrs. Johnson at virtually every location of their visit by staying

on the air 34 of the 44 hours of their stay. Such efforts brought American Heritage Foundation awards to Radio Vagabond. It won as the Best Military Radio Station In The World For 1966. AFKN-TV won as the Best Military Television Station For 1967.

The next year saw further improvement in AFKN's news coverage capability with the inception in January of the AFRTS voice circuit connecting Seoul to Washington. This allowed instantaneous coverage of news and sports. Within two hours of going on-line, the Armed Forces in Korea were able to hear President Johnson's 1967 State Of The Union Address. The network also covered Vice President Humphrey's visit to the inauguration of Korean President Park Chung Hee later in the year.

#### POOL COVERAGE OF THE PUEBLO INCIDENT

The network gave full coverage to the North Korean capture of the *USS Pueblo*. The network began to report on the story from the moment the North Koreans seized the surveillance ship off the coast on January 23, 1968. It ran for almost a year.

From the beginning of negotiations for the release of the ship's crew, AFKN assumed a key role in reporting the story. Panmunjom's relative isolation, its position within the Demilitarized Zone and its controlled access routes dictated that AFKN provide the radio and television pool coverage for Western networks.

The network began to work directly with the 8th Army Public Affairs Office in planning media coverage of the crew release whenever it occurred. They made arrangements for broadcast circuits from key locations in Korea. They prepared for live radio transmissions back to Washington. A special plane would fly videotapes of the release to Japan. There they would transmit them via satellite to the United States and the rest of the world. AFKN also secured permission to broadcast all proceedings live on radio. They pre-planned to duplicate the videotape so that AFKN viewers throughout the Korean peninsula could see the event within two to four hours of its occurrence.

In the fall, they rebuilt the mobile TV van and installed new equipment to broadcast the release of the *Pueblo* crew whenever it occurred. They also would use it to cover Bob Hope's Christmas Show. During the several months of delicate negotiations, military authorities did not permit any test runs nor even a check of broadcast lines to the northern areas. They feared that rumors could start and spread.

The network broadcast the Bob Hope Special live on both radio and television. However, another broadcast would overshadow the two-and-a-half-hour show just two days later.

On Saturday morning, December 21, the network received word that the possibility of a release seemed real. That night the PAO passed official word that the release would take place on Monday. The next morning, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Tennant, Jr., AFKN's Commander since August, called together the 50 staffers who were to be involved with the radio and television coverage. After going over the changes in ground rules, they made final revisions in the plans. They reviewed the timetable and confirmed assignments. They loaded the TV van, the radio van, the lighting truck and a special bus. Then, shortly after noon, twenty-seven AFKN men headed north over roads made icy by a two-inch snowfall. After arriving at Panmunjom early in the evening, they set up the equipment. By daylight, everything was in place.

AFKN Radio began its five-and-a-half hour broadcast at 9:00 AM with the signing of the formal document - the so-called "apology." It continued its coverage while the North Koreans delayed the actual release from 11:00 am to 11:30. It broadcast the press conference of Major General Gilbert Woodward, the chief negotiator. There, he explained the contents of the document and a second one in which the United States promptly repudiated the "apology."

Up to the actual release, the television crews taped background shots and prepared for the arrival of the *Pueblo*'s crew at the Bridge of No Return. Both radio and television reported the exchange live as the eighty-two men left captivity. AFKN followed with coverage of the crew's first hours of freedom. It also broadcast the press conference at which the ship's Captain, Commander Lloyd Bucher, described the ordeal that he and his men had endured.

The network wrapped up the five-hours of coverage with a summary of the day's events. A jet flew to Japan with the videotapes for broadcast to the world. Meanwhile, the staff heliocoptered the backup videotapes and film to Seoul. There, they edited them. The story broadcast that evening on the late news. AFKN concluded its coverage with the departure of the crew the next day from Kimpo Air Base.(1)

The planning and preparations paid off! The network covered every scheduled event with no misses, breakdowns or glitches. The success with which AFKN handled the *Pueblo* story made their radio and television operations a proud model for all of AFRTS!

Upkeep of AFKN physical facilities was difficult. In the late 1970s, President Carter proposed withdrawing all American Forces from South Korea. That drastically reduced AFKN's budget. Even basic repairs couldn't be made. Only after President Reagan's decision to keep United States troops in Korea was the network able to replace worn out equipment and modernize its facilities.

### FEN IN TRANSITION

Despite receiving less support than other AFRTS networks, AFKN did have the advantage of providing service to a compact geographical area. The Far East Network was not so lucky. In November, 1953, it moved from Tokyo to new headquarters at South Camp Drake. Yet, FEN had to maintain and supervise outlets as far away as Guam and Taiwan. Over the years, the FEN staff seemed to be dealing more with changes in administration than with operations. These included of internal reorganizations, changes in jurisdictional control, and the opening or closing of various stations. Nonetheless, they covered such major stories as presidential visits, attempted coups and military exercises.

The Far East Network reached its peak of 20 outlets in 1954. In December, FEN Clark in the Philippines became the second network station to maintain a 24-hour AM radio operation. It followed the lead of the headquarters station, which began 'round-the-clock broadcasting shortly after the move to Camp Drake. The next November, Clark became the first FEN outlet to add television broadcasts. The Okinawa station became the second outlet to have television when it went on the air in December 1955.

By 1956, FEN began to shrink as U.S. military facilities in Japan experienced a phase-down period. Between 1956 and 1958, it deactivated, relocated or modified several stations into merely relay transmitters. In January, 1958, for example, FEN Sendai and its nearby relay transmitter ceased operation. Its equipment moved to Misawa Air Base where a new station went on the air the same month. FEN suffered a further reduction in March, 1959, when the Air Force transferred the Okinawa facility to the Commander on the island. AFRTS Okinawa then became an independent station. Administrative changes continued the next year. Finally, operation control transferred from the Army to the Air Force. The 5th Air Force headquarters in Japan assumed command responsibility.

Armed Forces Television finally reached the Japanese mainland Christmas Eve, 1960, when the Misawa television station went on the air. The new facility was the first UHF transmitter in Japan. AFRTS broadcasted on UHF so that the station would not compete with Japan's commercial VHF television operations. In 1962, FEN put television on the air at Chitosa and in early '63 at Wakkanai, using a closed circuit format to satisfy the Japanese requirements.

The early 1960s also marked the beginning of a series of reorganizations that changed the chain of command but effected little change within the FEN operation. In 1962, the Air Force formed the 6120th Broadcasting Squadron and placed FEN under its jurisdiction. In July, 1965, they

transferred FEN Clark from the network to the control of the local Air Force commander. The station became the headquarters of a new three-station AFRTS network in the Philippines. Together with Subic Bay and San Miguel, the Armed Forces Philippine Network (AFPN) was born. In July, 1971, the Air Force established the 6204th Broadcasting Squadron (BRS) at Clark and placed AFPN under its control. The next year when the United States returned Okinawa to Japanese control, AFRTS transferred Okinawa back to FEN and it once again became FEN, Okinawa.

A major reorganization of AFPN occurred in November, 1974. The 6001st Aerospace Support Squadron (AEROSS) in Thailand merged with the 6204th BRS. The new 6204th AEROSS controlled all AFRTS stations in the Philippines, in Thailand and on the island of Taiwan, rivalling FEN in size. However, in 1976, the 6204th AEROSS, then reduced to only the Philippine stations, merged with the 6120th Broadcast Squadron, which controlled FEN. The new 6204th Broadcasting Squadron assumed control of all stations in Japan, Okinawa and the Philippines. Thus, it became one of the largest military networks in the world.

Within all these mergers, another major reorganization took place. The FEN Clark station became headquarters for Detachment 1 of the 6204th BRS and FEN Okinawa became Detachment 2. Misawa joined the Japanese network, which included the headquarters station serving the Kanto Plain area around Tokyo, Iwakuni, and Sasebo.

In 1978, FEN Headquarters and FEN Tokyo radio moved from their longtime base at South Camp Drake into new, modern studios on Yokota Air Base. Television came to U.S. forces scattered throughout the Kanto Plain when KPTM, Channel 11, signed on the air late that year. Because of Japanese restrictions, the television operation required a closed circuit cable operation on each base with the programming sent out from headquarters via microwave.

Television did not reach all American forces in Europe until the late 1970s. Unlike the Far East, especially Korea, and the many remote bases that provided little in the way of outside entertainment, U.S. soldiers in Europe could usually find lots of things to do during their off time. The European Command expressed reluctance in establishing television one base at a time, arguing that when it came, it should be available everywhere at once. However, the Command simply didn't have the amount of money needed to execute such a major project. AFN's own senior civilian staff had no experience in television. So, they'd just as soon allow the Air Force to continue control of the medium.

### AFRTS' IMPACT ON SHADOW AUDIENCES

Whatever the reasons, during the 50s, 60s and far into the 70s, AFN continued to operate only as a radio net-

work. While its primary audience remained the U.S. forces stationed across West Germany and in West Berlin, AFN soon created a "shadow" audience of significant size.

Officially, the Army ignored AFN's German and other European listeners for two compelling reasons. First, control of AFN remained in the hands of the Army commanders who wanted to maintain the network strictly as a morale and information tool for their commands. Any attempt to exploit the shadow audience might affect the network's credibility and alienate the soldiers. Second, the AFRTS programming from commercial networks was to be used only to provide entertainment to the troops, without advertisements or any form of political messages.

Even without any conscious effort to attract the foreign audience, AFN probably enjoyed a regular, German and European listening population greater than the size of its primary audience. This continued into the 1960s, even after more and more European stations returned to the airwaves. Whatever the actual numbers involved, AFN had a real impact on its civilian audience, affecting mostly their musical tastes. In a 1956 article, *Variety* observed, "It's no exaggeration to say that AFN stations are mostly to blame for the Germans' strong predilection for American music." Four years later, *Billboard* commented, "It is AFN's tremendous European audience that created the trans-Atlantic market for American music. There is scant doubt on the score."<sup>(2)</sup> ("Their pun, not ours.)

In England, during the war, AFN influenced British listening habits even though the many radio stations scattered on Army bases had a limited range. Even after the war, AFN reached audiences on the British Isles since AFN Frankfurt could be heard readily in England at night. The American programming offered a lively alternative to the more conservative programming of the BBC. A 1964 USIA survey found that eighteen percent of a random sample of Britons reported listening to AFN. That's quite an impact!<sup>(3)</sup>

In the broader perspective, AFN undoubtedly had a more profound impact on Western Europeans than just on their culture. AFN programs provided a credible picture of life in the United States. The Europeans believed it because of the absence of propaganda that typified Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. If the network's outlets could carry news stories critical of the nation's political leaders, stories of corruption, of tragedy - in other words, the same information heard back home on civilian radio - the European listeners could conclude that the programs reflected the "real" America.

However valuable this benefit proved to be, AFN's only stated purpose was to supply news, information and entertainment to its military audience. During the '50s and '60s, it continued to build on the reputation it had

earned from its coverage of the constantly covering the Nuremberg War Crime Trials and the Berlin Blockade. AFN newsmen constantly covered live events. These included the formation of the West German Government, the East Berlin riots of 1953, the construction of the Berlin Wall and President John F. Kennedy's famous "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" speech in 1961.

AFN declined in size during the late 1940s as American Forces left Europe. After the formation of NATO and the increase in troops on the continent, it would begin to grow again. AFN Nuremberg went on the air in 1950. AFN Kaiserslautern began broadcasting from a van in an open field in February, 1953, before moving into a permanent home in April, 1954. With NATO headquarters located in France and so many American military personnel stationed there, AFN started negotiations with the French government to begin broadcasting. The discussions dragged on as French governments came and went in the pre-de Gaulle days. It was not until 1959 that AFN once again broadcast on French soil. They did so using small 50-watt FM transmitters at most bases and relaying programs from three studios in Verdun, Orleans, and Poitiers.

AFRTS always had to deal with host nation sensitivity. It rarely broadcast stories critical of the local government. Nonetheless, the shaky politics in France proved particularly frustrating. The French were sensitive to American comics poking fun at them at a time when the country couldn't seem to govern itself. So, AFRTS reacted. They agreed that network stations would broadcast no negative references about the government. This included a restriction on commentary about France of any kind, even if rebroadcast from an American commercial network. To insure compliance, the French assigned a government official to the network's headquarters.

However, AFN's return to France lasted only nine years. When President de Gaulle withdrew French forces from NATO control in 1967, he expelled all foreign troops stationed in France. With the departure of American Forces required within 2 years, AFN packed up its 1968 equipment and left. One station stayed with the U.S. contingent at the new NATO headquarters in Belgium.

### THE GLORY DAYS OF RADIO

Such problems aside, the period marked the glory days of AFN as a radio network. The draft brought large numbers of experienced radio broadcasters into the service and those who found themselves in Germany made every effort to be transferred into AFN. This gave the network a large cadre of experienced professional broadcasters. Funding also allowed for the maintenance of full-time news bureaus in Paris, London, Bonn and at most network affiliates. Although television led to the

disappearance of most radio entertainment programs on the United States networks, at AFN it created a resurgence of local programming. To supplement the entertainment package from AFRTS, which now contained primarily disc jockey-type shows, AFN increased the production of its own programs.

During the period from 1960-1964, when Lieutenant Colonel Robert Cranston commanded AFN, the network reached its production peak. The network was churning out seventy-five hours of live programming each week. They produced live drama play-by-play sports special extended newscasts, and special events programs such as "Weekend World" and "Tempo."

#### AFRTS COVERS PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION

The event that probably stands out most during the early '60s was President Kennedy's assassination in November, 1963.

November 22nd had been a slow news day at the Castle. In the newsroom, News Editor David Mynatt was preparing to broadcast "Report from Europe," a roundup of events from around the continent. The quarterly meeting of affiliate program chiefs had just concluded. The Network Program Director, Don Brewer, was hosting a cocktail party for them in the Frankfurt Officers' Club. Cranston drove his car on the Autobahn, stuck in a traffic jam while trying to return to Frankfurt. He'd been at a meeting at USAREUR Headquarters in Heidelberg.

At 7:33 PM, the teletype in the Castle newsroom typed out a message:

"PRECEDE KENNEDY DALLAS, NOV 22 (UPI) - THREE SHOTS WERE FIRED AT PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S MOTORCADE TODAY IN DOWNTOWN DALLAS."

"Music in the Air," then one of AFN's most popular programs, was on the air hosted by Sergeant Lloyd Eyre. In the newsroom, Specialist Four John Grimaldi read the bulletin. Since it contained no word of injuries to members of the motorcade, he decided to stand by for further developments. At 7:39, the teletype began again:

"FLASH FLASH KENNEDY SERIOUSLY WOUNDED PERHAPS FATALLY BY ASSASSIN'S BULLET."

Grimaldi tore off the bulletin and took it to Mynatt. AFN policies have always been very conservative about breaking into programs for news flashes. This was different. Even though a regular newscast would go on the air in just twenty minutes, Mynatt broke into the studio.

"Put me on the air," he told Eyre.

At 7:41 PM, with his voice quivering with emotion, Mynatt told AFN listeners, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we interrupt this program for a special news bulletin.

President Kennedy ... on a visit to Dallas, Texas ... has been reportedly seriously wounded - perhaps fatally. We'll have more as we receive it here at AFN."

This began four days of uninterrupted coverage of the assassination and its aftermath. Newsmen eating dinner at the AFN club heard the announcement on the house speaker and rushed back to the newsroom. Staffers began to mobilize. They called Brewer and the program staff at the Officers Club. Cranston heard the news on his car radio and fought desperately through traffic to get back to Frankfurt.

When a second update came over the teletype, Mynatt again pre-empted the program in progress. He read a report that both Kennedy and Governor Connally had been wounded. At 8:00, Mynatt began the regularly scheduled program. As short bulletins came across the wires, Grimaldi ran them in to Mynatt who interspersed them into the show. By the time he went off the air at 8:15, AFN cancelled all its regular programming. It would not resume its normal schedule until after the President's burial in Arlington Cemetery.

By phone, Cranston ordered up the Atlantic Cable for direct reports from the United States. He instructed the Network to ignore its Midnight sign-off time and to continue broadcasting.

At 8:25, the newsroom received a flash from CBS radio announcing that Kennedy had died. Wilhelm Loehr, the AFN music librarian rushed to the Castle to begin preparing special music programming. The news staff fanned out to gather European reactions for inclusions in the continuous news coverage of the story.

The continuous reporting of Kennedy's assassination confirmed AFN's reputation for fast, accurate and objective handling of news. Several German newspapers criticized the limited coverage which German radio provided for the story. Although AFN's use of the Atlantic Cable cost the U.S. Government four dollars a minute, the network stayed with it providing four days of outstanding coverage. It was worth every dime.

The story proved to be the last major event which AFN broadcast from the Castle. In 1962, the Fabwerke Hoechst, Germany's giant chemical combine, bought the castle from the Von Bruening family. They informed the Bonn Government that Hoechst would like to reclaim it for its own use. Hoechst said they would create a city and company museum. Both Bonn and AFN promptly agreed. While the castle could provide beauty and charm, the AFN staff recognized the advantages of operating from real studios. They needed a building that didn't have creaking floors, wintry drafts and insufficient lavatories.

To replace the castle, Bonn selected a site next door to the extensive Hessischer Rundfunk facilities in Frankfurt.

Among the benefits of the new headquarters, which the German government built, was the AFN staff's ability to develop both personal and professional contacts with their German broadcasting counterparts. In return for the right to reclaim the castle, the Bonn government assumed the \$2.3-million costs of building the new headquarters. To create some highly sophisticated soundproofing, they buried the studios deep inside the core of the building and mounted them on gigantic springs. Individually air-conditioned rooms housed heat-sensitive equipment. The builders bonded and completely grounded all metal used in the construction. They broke ground in 1964 and two years later, AFN moved out of its fourteenth century home and into state-of-the-art facilities. This was an apt reward for two decades of pioneering excellence.

At the opening celebration, speakers suggested that the facilities would be adequate for as long as AFN existed. The prediction proved accurate for only seven years, the period the network remained a radio-only broadcast service. The limited scale of Air Force TV operations in Germany, which had begun in 1957, couldn't provide service to the vast American Forces in Europe. No Army

facility received television until Bad Kreuznach tied into the Air Force system in 1971.

Later that year, Secretary of the Army Robert Froehlke visited Europe. He declared, "The biggest boost to morale in Germany would be to give our troops and their families American television." His statement would set the wheels in motion for television.

The troops would need it.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 19

- (1) "Men of the *Pueblo*," "After Action Report," n.d.[1968].
- (2) "Variety" May 2, 1956, "Billboard" July 22, 1960.
- (3) "USIA, "Listening to Foreign Broadcasts in Six Countries of Western Europe," Research Report No. R-224-64, Washington, 1964.

## VIETNAM: THE EARLY DAYS

Despite the importance of entertainment programming, the news component of AFRTS has always had a key role in the total broadcast operations.

### THE ARMED FORCES NEWS BUREAU

At its peak during World War II, AFRS shortwave programs were beaming 1,086-hours of programming a week. One-third of San Francisco's programming was news. Almost twenty-four percent of the New York broadcasting day consisted of news. After the surrender of Germany, the need for extensive operations in New York diminished as troops began to return home or transferred to the Pacific. AFRS cut programming by sixty-nine percent. The staff was reduced to six people.

Fortunately, the fall of Japan didn't end the shortwave operation on either coast. News and feature programs began to appear, including "The Navy Reporter," which went on the air June 5, 1945, and continued well into the postwar period. Secretary of the Navy Forrestal introduced the first program asking sailors around the world to write-in and ask questions on any topic they wished. On the entertainment side, a three-times-a-week program called "Musical Memories" debuted in the fall of 1945.

In anticipation of consolidating operations, some thought to close the New York facilities during 1946. In the end, New York stayed open while the San Francisco station closed. West Coast short-wave operations moved to Los Angeles.

By 1952, sixty percent of AFRS stations around the world had the capacity for tape recording programs. The local stations could record the shortwave programs and rebroadcast them at a later time. While AFRS shortwave broadcasts diminished to fourteen hours daily, the headquarters supplemented the news and information programming with about sixty-three hours a week of entertainment sent out via mail service.

In an effort to centralize the news operations, the Armed Forces Information and Education Office moved the News Bureau to Arlington, Virginia, on December 9, 1965. Four months later, the Pentagon decided to consolidate its Armed Forces Press, Radio and Television Service in New York and the facility in Los Angeles. It would be run by the Armed Forces News Bureau. On January 1, 1967, AFNB began its broadcast operations. Later that year, it became AFRTS-W. Its mission of providing news via shortwave stayed the same.

Not all AFRTS personnel readily accepted the establishment of AFNB. Many expressed concern that the agency represented an "inherent threat of centralized news management and censorship." To others, it seemed that AFNB was an effort to automate and centralize the entire AFRTS operation. That would reduce the networks and independent outlets to no more than relay stations.(1)

The concern that AFNB would produce news programs that would present only the military's point of view quickly became moot. Over the years, the AFRTS shortwave operation had written and broadcast many of its own news programs. Once in operation, AFNB eliminated its own newscasts and began sending out only the regular on-the-hour news programs from the commercial networks and audio services. That policy continues to this day. This action removed the concern over managed news, but it brought complaints that the network news now included military spot announcements. By contrast, the shortwave news had no interruptions.

The inclusion of AFRTS-produced spots solved the problem of using commercial news containing advertisements. It provided a way to carry out a key AFRTS mission, to promote internal information. The network simply replaced one form of advertising for another. Plugs for bonds, safety and reenlistment replaced spots for cars, deodorants and aspirins. As Hoyt L. Wirtz, AFRTS Chief of Broadcast Services, noted in 1972, this provided a "fantastic opportunity to deliver messages about service benefits and opportunities."(2) The format would prove to be extraordinarily effective and it continues to this day.

By 1972, AFRTS-Washington employed more than two dozen civilians and more than a dozen military personnel. It broadcast 336 newscasts weekly, nearly three-quarters of them "live" from the radio networks. When CBS Radio began its 24-hour newscast schedule April 1, 1973, AFRTS-W began carrying the hourly programs. They built in a seven-second delay in order to give the staff time to insert the AFRTS spots in commercial slots. With the end of the New York and Los Angeles operations in 1966, AFRTS-W became an all-talk operation. It reached troops and Navy ships around the world from transmitters on both the East and West coasts.

### THE VIET NAM CONFLICT ESCALATES

Even before AFRTS-W started increasing numbers of Americans were being sent to Vietnam. For the first time since Korea, they were engaged in combat. When President Kennedy came into office in January, 1961, a 685-man limit existed on the size of the U.S. military mission in Saigon. At the end of November, the number of servicemen in Vietnam rose to 948. It doubled to 2,646 by January 9, 1962. It doubled again to 5,576 by June 30.

Two Army helicopter companies were flying combat support missions. An air commando unit, code named "Jungle Jim," was "instructing the Vietnamese Air Force in combat air support tactics and techniques." (3)

As was the history of armed forces broadcasting, Americans in remote locations began to seek means of entertainment. Like those stories of the Canal Zone, in Alaska, in the Philippines and in Casablanca, they began to provide radio services for themselves in "an uncoordinated, spontaneous effort." This happened not only in Saigon, but wherever U.S. troops and advisors found themselves throughout Viet Nam. In Saigon, the station operated in a bachelor enlisted men's quarters using "informally" requisitioned equipment (scavenged and 'comshawed'). The soldier's handmade transmitter reached as far as the military mission in the South Vietnamese capital.(4)

On July 6, 1962, Radio Hanoi began beaming programs to the recently designated U.S. Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam (MACV), following the tradition of Tokyo Rose and Axis Sally. Whatever audience the music and propaganda broadcasts garnered, Radio Hanoi lost only forty days later when American Forces Radio, Saigon, went on the air!

In early 1962, General Paul D. Harkins, Commander MACV, directed his chief of communications (J-6, Signal) to look into the matter of providing entertainment and news for his troops. His staff negotiated with the South Vietnamese government to use 820-KC in the Saigon area and four other frequencies for use in-country. AFRS in the Philippines donated a World War II vintage tactical transmitter. MACV erected it in the Viet Name Radio Communication complex at Phu Tho. The Rex Hotel in downtown Saigon housed the studios. The station went on the air at 6:00 AM on August 15th. In his opening address, General Harkins cited the connection between the AFRS in World War II and the AFRTS in Vietnam.

"The creation of AFRS proved a boon to the morale of our fighting men in World War II. Today, many American servicemen are again far away from their homes and families in many locations throughout the world. The need for Armed Forces Radio, therefore, continues. It is perhaps even more important considering the complexities of today's world." Harkins acknowledged the efforts of both Americans and Vietnamese to put AFRTS Saigon on the air. He said it provided "tangible evidence of the teamwork that characterizes our joint effort here." He concluded with the "sincere wish that AFRTS Saigon will uphold and enhance the outstanding reputation that the Armed Forces Radio Service enjoys throughout the world and that it'll be America's most successful medium of information, education and entertainment."

At first, almost all audio, transmitter and broadcasting

equipment was "borrowed" from the United States and Vietnamese military and civilian agencies. Spare parts and supplies came from various military resources. The staff came from COMUSMACV personnel resources, a five-man crew and several part-time volunteer announcers who ran the station and an initially 18-hour broadcast day. As an official AFRTS outlet, the station used news from the AFRTS-LA short-wave operation. However, neither of the California transmitters at Delano or Dixon produced anything approaching a reliable signal in Saigon. To get the news, AFRTS in the Philippines arranged to relay the short-wave signal. This they did through the Voice of America transmitter for about two hours a day - from 3:00 to 5:00 PM Saigon time.

By mid-August, 1964, the studios and administrative personnel moved from the Rex Hotel in Saigon to the Brink BOQ. That location provided more operating space. The station also acquired a Bauer one-kilowatt transmitter through normal procurement channels to replace the tactical transmitter. That significantly improved both the quality and strength of the broadcast signal.

MACV deployed small 50-watt repeating transmitters throughout South Viet Nam so that most American troops could pick up the signal from AFRTS Radio, Saigon. The Saigon station acquired a 50-watt Gates FM transmitter and two-bay FM antenna, which went on the air by the end of October. By December, when AFRTS sent an inspection team from Los Angeles, AFRTS Vietnam had a staff of seventeen, including six local national employees.

The team found significant problems in coverage throughout the country. AFRTS' final report noted that AFRTS Radio Saigon sent out broadcasts through eleven relay outlets. "According to MACV estimates," it said, "ninety-four percent of the U.S. military personnel in Viet Nam are within range of radio broadcast. The DoD team made personal observations at four of these outlets. They found the coverage to be inadequate because of the technical lack of equipment."

The report praised the success of the Commander's Information, Education and Entertainment program in the Saigon area. The inspection team found that the station in the capital provided "an essential command tool in reaching personnel." They also concluded that the "technical deficiencies of available equipment greatly reduce the effectiveness of AFRTS radio broadcast to personnel stationed outside the Saigon coverage area."

#### VIET CONG BOMBS AFRTS

Before the station could take steps to improve the station's range, it came face to face with the reality of operating in a combat theater. On Christmas Eve, listeners to AFRTS Radio Saigon suddenly lost their signal in the middle of a holiday program. The Viet Cong had set off

250-pounds of plastic explosive at the Brink BOQ, killing two people and injuring scores of Americans. The blast caused considerable damage to the hotel. The stations' studios fell to ruins. The staff immediately turned to an auxiliary unit and put the station back on the air in twenty minutes. They broadcast news reports of the explosion until normal service could be restored about two hours later.(5)

The ability to maintain reliable operations helped AFRTS Saigon create the perception that it served as the soldiers' "little bit of home." The station manager acknowledged that programming remained "a big challenge to satisfy the needs of all our listeners." By the end of 1964, the station's staff of 19 full-time personnel was producing fifty percent of its own programming. The balance came from the AFRTS package. It broadcast local features on Viet Nam, including one-minute spots on the country's history, customs and language. For its live news programs, Radio Saigon used the Associated Press and United Press International wire services. It also aired taped remote interviews for its coverage of special events.(6)

To improve the broadcasting operation as suggested in the AFRTS report, MACV-J6 conducted its own study in January, 1965. It concluded that saturation coverage to reach the 23,000 troops in the country could be achieved by using four 50-kilowatt and several 10-kilowatt stations dispersed throughout Vietnam. AFRTS quickly approved the recommendations and the staff purchased the equipment. Unfortunately, the Saigon government withdrew the use of the station's frequency in the capital. This forced MACV to conduct a general reexamination of the whole frequency and location plan. Outside of Saigon four large stations operated at Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Pleiku and Cam Ranh Bay.

In February, while the efforts to improve coverage continued, the radio programming underwent changes. Radio Saigon, with renewed approval of its frequency increased its programming from eighteen to twenty-four hours a day. It also commenced special FM programming during the afternoon and evening hours as another step toward expanded operation. Meanwhile, in Washington, Pentagon leaders began even more ambitious plans to provide information and entertainment to the rapidly growing number of troops in Vietnam. These plans included television.

#### THE "BLUE EAGLES"

In May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave a special assignment to the Navy's Oceanographic Air Survey Unit. Operating out of Patuxent River, Maryland, they would fly C-121 Super Constellation aircraft as AM/FM and TV transmitters for "research and other special projects." The planes received the names "Blue Eagles." In May, work

began on Blue Eagle One for configuration as a high-power communications and relay station. When completed, the Navy deployed the plane to Viet Nam to broadcast AM and short-wave. They arrived in-country in time to provide live radio broadcasts of the 1965 World Series. Sandy Koufax pitched a shutout in the seventh game as the Champion Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Minnesota Twins 4 games to 3. And, the troops, delighted, heard it all.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon determined that television would significantly contribute to the U.S. policy objectives in Viet Nam. These included policies of rural pacification, urban stability, national unity, free world support and the U.S. presence there. The Navy began special modifications on Blue Eagle Two and Three. Their new configuration enabled them to broadcast television programming on two channels with several radio communications capabilities. Each plane had two television transmitters (200-watts each), AM (10,000-watts), FM (1,000-watts), and short-wave/single sideband with a four-channel teletype hook up (10,000-watts, all simultaneously if required). They also had two video tape recorders, six audio tape recorders, two 16mm film projectors, and a small live studio.

While the Blue Eagles were outfitted, on December 2, 1965, Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance approved additional television facilities outside Saigon. The United States and Saigon Governments reached a formal agreement on December 24, authorizing AFRTS television in the Republic. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and Tran Van Do, RVN Minister of Foreign Affairs, officially signed the agreement in Saigon on January 3, 1966. That paved the way for the Blue Eagles to begin broadcasting. Deployed to Vietnam in January, 1966, the planes began flying on February 7. U.S. Forces received television on Channel 11 and Vietnamese citizens viewed Viet Namese programs on Channel 9.

Television service began with a special program that included speeches by Premier Nguyen Cao Ky, Ambassador Lodge and General William Westmoreland. AFRTS Saigon produced the program right in the airport terminal at Tan Son Nhut. Cables connected the cameras to the video recorders aboard one of the Blue Eagle planes parked nearby. The plane then took off, and at 7:30 PM television came to Vietnam with the broadcast of the official greetings. Regular programming began a half-hour later. The programming initially consisted of the AFRTS television package on 16mm film, coupled with live news broadcasts from the plane's onboard studio.

The first step in providing television for the Vietnamese was a studio set up in downtown Saigon to provide programs on video tape. Vice President Hubert Humphrey emphasized in a speech that television

programs by and for the Vietnamese should be brought to the most remote villages. He believed TV could be "a decisive factor in nation-building and establishing national unity in South Viet Nam." AFRTS Saigon received the task of providing engineering assistance to the Joint United States Public Affairs Office. They would build independent television stations for the Vietnamese government. This marked the first time any Armed Forces Radio and Television network had received the assignment of such a mission.<sup>(7)</sup>

In a February 5, 1966, memo, the Deputy Secretary of Defense established a four-station radio network using high-powered transmitters. MACV had proposed the transmitters and provided funds to supplement the Command's budget, both for the radio facilities and to increase the proposed television facilities. As part of this effort, construction began in Saigon for AFRTS television permanent studios. Plans evolved for the creation of a South Vietnamese wide television network, improved radio broadcast facilities and an increase in AFRTS personnel.<sup>(8)</sup>

In short order, contractors built seven television vans, using the model of the AFRS experience with mobile stations in World War II and Korea. The Sacramento Army Depot supervised the construction of the vans themselves. Each contained complete studio and transmitting equipment, a 5,000-watt transmitter, two 16mm projectors, a slide projector and multiplexer, a full audio and video console and a small studio with TV camera. A mobile camera supplied with a viewfinder could be used in a larger studio. The TV station/van also housed a 120-foot lightweight tower and a specially-designed antenna. Two trailer-mounted 45-kilowatt military generators accompanied the vans. The generators had ample capacity to power the station. The vans were a major achievement in TV engineering for the field.

The major achievement in programming took place on March 24, 1966, when AFRTS established a new two-way Pacific link between Saigon and AFRTS-LA in Los Angeles by underwater cable. This enabled AFVN to receive stateside radio programming twenty-four hours daily from the AFNB in Washington. Even so, major sports events, important speeches and top-rated special events could not be broadcast on a real time basis as they were over networks in the United States.

#### AFRTS PLANES MORTARED

The war itself again intruded on AFRTS Saigon operations on April 13, when the Viet Cong attacked Tan Son Nhut Air Base with mortars, damaging all three Blue Eagle aircraft. Blue Eagle Two sustained two hits. A survey of that damage by two Navy inspectors concluded that, while the planes could be repaired, the work would

take from nine to thirteen weeks. Although Blue Eagle Three could fly, TV programming diminished to five days a week while civilian technicians and Air Force maintenance men frantically undertook the repairs. After 28 sixteen-hour workdays, Blue Eagle Two resumed flying with its regular television programming on May 11. That was at least five weeks ahead of the predicted repair time.

Meanwhile, the television vans began to arrive in Viet Nam and a small group of technicians began the difficult task of installing the equipment. Under the command of Captain Willis Haas, they located the first van on Vung Chua Mountain in Qui Nhon Province and began broadcasting on September 25, 1966. General Westmoreland cut a ribbon of television tape to open the station. In his remarks, he noted that Qui Nhon was the first ground television station in Viet Nam. The planned country-wide TV network would be of "great value to the troops in providing wholesome entertainment and news of the world."

The Qui Nhon Post Exchange sold nearly one thousand television sets in anticipation of the station's opening! Haas said, "We believe we have 5,000 to 10,000 viewers now and we expect eventually to reach all 24,000 U.S. servicemen in our broadcast area."

Initially the station broadcast for three hours a day, but eventually increased its schedule to fifty-six hours a week. Included was the TV series "Combat." One of the staff observed, "We might even have our own version of 'Combat' one of these nights. We have an alert about once a week because of the Viet Cong."<sup>(9)</sup>

On October 21, the second van/station went on the air from Monkey Mountain in Da Nang. Four days later, the new flagship station in Saigon commenced broadcasting both AFRTS and Vietnamese programs.

With the need for aerial transmissions over Saigon eliminated, the Blue Eagle planes began flying south of the city to serve the Mekon Delta with Vietnamese programming. Then, on September 30, the beloved Constellations flew their last regular missions over Vietnam. They had performed an extraordinary service, bringing radio and TV to thousands of American and Vietnamese soldiers and civilians. Two of the big planes returned to their home at the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River in Maryland. The third stayed at Tan Son Nhut as a backup for the ground stations.

The Saigon station's official opening took place on October 31, 1966, with Premier Nguyen Cao Ky and General Westmoreland taking part in the ceremonies. They simultaneously cut a video tape stretched between the main studio and the transmitter buildings. They also laid the cornerstone for the new Vietnamese TV studio although actual construction didn't begin until late May, 1967.

Once in the new studios, AFRTS Vietnam became the first Armed Forces Radio and Television operation to present radio news broadcasts on the hour, twenty-four hours a day. A small group of military newsmen covered local news briefings and news from the combat fronts, often providing current information ahead of the commercial press. In addition, the station's news department supplied Vietnam war reports to the Armed Forces News Bureau in Washington for worldwide dissemination.

The staff of AFRTS Vietnam never lost sight of the fact that they were functioning in a combat zone. On December 23, 1966, while a Christmas party was taking place in the new building, the station received small arms fire. No casualties occurred and broadcast operations continued without interruption.

The growth of the United States military involvement in Vietnam required a continued buildup of AFRTS personnel. Arrival of new staff and responsibilities usually outpaced the receipt and installation of equipment. The radio and news sections of the Saigon station moved into the new studios between January 2 and 6, 1967. AM radio began operations from its expanded facilities at 9:00 AM on the 6th. FM broadcasting originated from the new studios on January 13. The network reached its authorized personnel strength of 161 just a few weeks later.

The remaining five vans finally arrived and went into operation. The third van became operational on Dragon Mountain in Pleiku on February 1. Van four, sited on Hon Tre Island, near Nha Trang, provided service to both Nha Trang and Cam Ranh Bay and went on the air March 13. The last three vans arrived at almost the same time, and two went on the air in May. Van five began operations within the city of Hue on the 15th. Van six went to Tuy Hoa and started broadcasting on the 26th. The last van stayed at the AFRTS compound in Saigon where it served as a training unit for replacements.

The Saigon station housed the network headquarters, including the supply and engineering sections. It contained the main studio building with AM and FM master control, a newsroom, three radio production studios and a record library. On the TV side, it had a TV film library, telescine and kinescope room, TV master control and a large television studio. Other facilities in the compound included a transmitter building. It housed two 25,000-watt TV transmitters for channels 9 and 11. It also housed a 1,000-watt AM radio transmitter and a 1,000-watt FM transmitter. A generator building that had three 200,000-watt generators provided power for the entire complex. A 300-foot steel tower supported an 80-foot television antenna, specially designed to radiate signals on both TV channels. The design of the antenna increased the effective power of the transmitters by an approximate factor of

ten, with an effective radiated power of 240,000-watts. That was sufficient to cover Saigon and the entire surrounding area!

### THE AMERICAN FORCES VIETNAM NETWORK BEGINS

Despite the increase to twenty-two transmitters, some areas of South Vietnam still couldn't receive an adequate radio signal. To solve the problem, AFRTS installed five high powered AM transmitters throughout the country. Three of the five were 50,000-watts, positioned at Cat Lo (for the Saigon and Delta area), Pleiku and Cam Ranh Bay. The remaining two 10,000-watt transmitters provided a 5-millivolt signal throughout most of South Vietnam. When the transmitter at Da Nang became operational on June 1, 1967, AFRTS Vietnam became a true radio network. It adopted the name "American Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN) in July.

For television, work began on an unmanned repeater station at Phan Rang. It would relay the TV signal from the Hon Tre Island transmitter to the American troops within a 100-square-mile area. When it began broadcasting on October 22, 1967, the television network became fully operational. Estimates indicated that at least eighty-five percent of the American forces in Vietnam were able to receive AFVN television programs.

For the first time in history, a military command had provided full television service to its troops in the field.

There were even more milestones to reach for armed forces broadcasting.

To do so would require more than G. I. ingenuity, more than dedication and hard work. For some, it would require the ultimate sacrifice.

### NOTES - CHAPTER 20

- (1) *Broadcasting*, May 13, 1968, p 80.
- (2) *Miliary Journalist*, Summer, 1972, p 91.
- (3) *Pentagon Papers*, pp 89, 110.
- (4) "Fact Sheet," American Forces Viet Nam Network, n.d. (1972) Unless otherwise indicated, the following material comes from this source.
- (5) *Army Times*, January 27, 1965, p E4.
- (6) *Ibid.*
- (7) *New York Times*, February 8, 1988, p 16.
- (8) Deputy Secretary of Defense memorandum, "Armed Forces Radio and Television Service for the Republic of Viet Nam," February 5, 1966; *Stars and Stripes* (Pacific), September 1, 1966, p 1.
- (9) Teletype story, September 25, 1966; Interview with Willis Haas, November 9, 1984.

## CHAPTER 21

# VIETNAM, THAILAND AND THE FINAL DAYS

As work progressed toward the completion of the Viet Nam Network's radio and television facilities, concurrent efforts continued to improve the program content of both radio and TV.

Following the move to the new studios, the station made several additions to the AFVN news services. The UPI "rip-n-read" radio wire replaced the old UPI press wire. For news sources, the station obtained ABC Television News film, AP radio service and the AP Library Photo Service. All this was in operation by the end of 1967.

Local news, sports, weather and command information productions accounted for eleven percent of the total schedule. Fifty-five hours a week, one-third of the total programming, carried command information subjects. These included United States and world information features. On an average, more than one hundred radio and television command information spots aired weekly. For special events, AFVN broadcast such programs as "The Bob Hope Christmas Show." The network's remote crew recorded that program on Christmas Day, 1967, on-location at Bearcat, and it was re-broadcast network wide on January 5, 1968.

### AFRTS UNDER ATTACK AGAIN

The network's existence in the midst of a war zone made it anything but typical. From the first attack on the station in December, 1964, the staff knew that they never functioned far from danger.

Almost three years to the day, on December 11, 1967, the Nha Trang television site came under mortar attack. The mess hall and NCO Club near the outlet took direct hits resulting in minor damage. The major casualty was the club TV set. The staff suffered no casualties.

On January 7, 1968, Da Nang's Red Beach radio transmitter facility sustained damage from rocket fragments. The attack severed the transmission line to the radiating towers. The engineering staff repaired it and restored complete operations within two hours.

During the Tet Offensive of 1968, AFVN Headquarters received at least six alerts that a Viet Cong ground attack was imminent and that the station was a target. As a result, the Network Commander completely revised the operational procedures. He created two complete 24-hour crews

to insure continuous manning and operation of the network's primary source of programming.

Such precautions couldn't, of course, prevent the attacks themselves:

### AFVN SUFFERS CASUALTIES AND WORSE

On the morning of January 31, 1968, the mess hall of the station on top of Vung Chua Mountain came under enemy fire, but sustained no damage. That night, North Vietnamese regulars, who were in control of Hue, attacked the AFVN station again with small arms and light mortar fire. The station NCOIC, Army Sergeant John Anderson, later recalled that until the Tet Offensive, the worst thing that'd happened there "was a couple of mortar attacks." He had every reason to believe he was going to get out of Viet Nam unscathed. He had a job in a secure area, he had only a month to go on his tour, and he was only six months away from retirement.

Explosions woke Anderson and his men at 2:30 in the morning. Moments later, bullets smashed through the barracks windows. The North Vietnamese had surrounded the station. No serious damage or injuries occurred initially, but the attack continued for the next five days. The staff defended itself until its supplies began to run out. By that time, a Marine sergeant had been killed and all the others had been wounded at least once. With only about 100 rounds of ammunition left and their water gone, the means to resist was fading fast.

The AFVN staff decided that their best chance for survival lay in getting to a friendly compound a mile away. They made a dash for it. Unfortunately, they ran into North Vietnamese army regulars and Viet Cong. They were captured and spent the next five years in North Vietnamese prisons. After he returned to the United States, Anderson remembered, "Getting captured is the last thing anyone ever thinks about. In Viet Nam, the possibility always existed, but it was so remote I never gave it any thought." (1)

Like Anderson, AFRTS staffers who served tours in Southeast Asia discovered what all soldiers quickly came to realize. The Viet Nam War was like no other conflict the United States had known.

There were no front lines.  
No place was completely safe.

### THREE MORE DIE

The AFVN Headquarters found this out on May 3, 1968, when the Saigon station suffered considerable damage from a car bomb attack. A Viet Cong drove a small Renault taxi loaded with 110 pounds of TNT across an open field adjacent to the station. He detonated the explosives directly in front of the AFVN television building. The blast destroyed the front of the headquarters, killing three network employees and two others in a small Vietnamese food stand near the compound. The explosion also damaged the

exterior structure of the AFVN headquarters building. It shattered glass, split the front door, blew holes in the roof and collapsed the ceiling in offices and studios. AFRTS' typical reaction: continued operations without interruption!

AFVN civilian personnel, mostly under contract from RCA, continued to devote considerable energy to building up South Vietnam's television capacity. Their efforts reached fruition on March 15, 1968, when AFVN turned over to the Saigon government the flagship station building adjacent to the American headquarters complex. Two more facilities remained under construction while the government's Saigon station commanded the largest Vietnamese audience in the country, an instrument by which the leadership attempted to win support.

The high power (250-Kilowatt effective radiated power) station in Can Tho would follow the GVN headquarters station on the air in late Spring, 1968. However, during the Tet Offensive, the battle damaged the almost-completed station so severely it had to be completely rebuilt. It became operational on November 19, 1968.

After the Communist defeat during Tet, AFVN put emphasis on the production of its own programming. This included the establishment of a on-the-job training and cross-training program. The program offered training in the production of command information spots and increased production support of AFVN detachments in the field. To promote creativity amongst field production personnel, AFVN trainees with AFVN regulars at headquarters produced several thirty-minute TV shows. These included "Nashville Vietnam," which featured country-and-western military talent, and "Strawberry Four," which highlighted a popular local Vietnamese vocal-and-instrumental combo.

#### SPECIAL EVENT MILESTONES

AFVN Network Radio also experienced a major overhaul during '68. Music programming changed in the direction of the "mod" sound since three-quarters of the listening audience in Viet Nam was under the age of 25. The average age was 19.5 years. Presidential election coverage was extensive, using the AFNB direct line from Washington to bring major network live coverage to the war zone. They broadcast the World Series and recapped it later in the day for the benefit of those unable to hear it the first time. At the end of the year, AFVN Radio broadcast live the major bowl games and did a special countdown of the 100 top songs of '68. The Beatles sang, "Revolution," and Jose Feliciano gave a new rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner." Troops danced to Blood, Sweat & Tears and laughed at Tiny Tim, as if the music of the day reflected exactly the conflicts of the times.

The radio network broadcast live, remote broadcasts from Tan Son Nhut when Archbishop Terrance Cooke celebrated a Midnight Christmas Mass and when evangelist

Billy Graham conducted a Sunrise Service. AFVN fed them simultaneously to AFRTS Washington for rebroadcast to Armed Forces stations around the world.

AFVN didn't rest in its drive to enhance its programming. AFRTS reached an agreement with CBS-TV to provide AFVN with video tapes of the network's Evening News Program with Walter Cronkite. The LA Headquarters began shipping the show to Saigon on a daily basis on April 17, '69. AFVN News took segments from the CBS programs and integrated them into its regular television newscasts.

On the radio side, AFVN News kept the troops informed of world, national and local events with live coverage of major events and reports from the worldwide wire services. In particular, the network reported on the progress of President Nixon's eight-point peace plan. It carried his announcement at Midway that the United States was reducing its forces in Viet Nam by twenty-five thousand.

By the summer, the network had nearly reached its final form. AFVN operated seven detachments sited in secure locations across Viet Nam besides the flagship station in Saigon. Five stations broadcast both radio and TV. Two transmitted television only.

The radio network had three 50,000-watt AM transmitters, three 10,000-watt AM transmitters, a 1,000-watt AM transmitter and four FM transmitters, two of which were shortly to become FM stereo. To enhance production at the TV outlets, each in-country station received two studio cameras for live TV broadcasts.

AFVN covered all aspects of July's Apollo 11 mission. From commercial network news operations, a special jet from the Philippines flew in video tapes of the daily events of the first journey to the moon. The tech staff worked 'round-the-clock to produce duplicate copies of the tapes. Then, they immediately distributed them to each of the seven in-country television outlets. Thanks to their dedication, most of the U.S. Forces in Viet Nam followed the voyage of Apollo 11 within twenty-four hours of the world-historic event!

The first successful moon landing probably didn't draw as much attention from the troops as did two speeches by President Nixon that September discussing troop cutbacks in Vietnam. AFVN radio broadcast both speeches live and carried excerpts on television the day after. The President's initiative marked the beginning of the end of Armed Forces Radio and Television in Southeast Asia.

The network continued to improve its service throughout 1969. The Saigon station began stereo FM broadcasting on October 14. Less than a month later, Da Nang followed suit.

The same month, thousands of American troops in Vietnam were able to watch same day coverage of the splashdown of Apollo 12. An Air Force jet immediately

flew a copy of this event which received via satellite by AFPN, to the AFVN where it aired only hours after the fact.

Special event reporting continued with in-country live remotes of Bob Hope Christmas shows and coverage of distinguished visitors. The most popular American to visit the troops (with the possible exception of Hope) was "The Duke," John Wayne. He coupled selfless visits with the troops with his 1965 on-location study for the movie, "The Green Berets."

Another celebrity, and the one to whom AFVN gave the most coverage, was pretty AFRTS disc jockey Chris Noel. The Los Angeles headquarters recruited the starlet in 1966. She would do a record and talk show in the mode of G.I. Jill, AFRS's World War II answer to Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose. On her program, "A Date With Chris," Noel played top-40 hits interspersed with words of comfort. Noel said that she took the job "because I wanted to do something for my country." Of her audience, she said, "All they had were little transistor radios to take them away from the lonely nights. For fifty-five minutes to have some softness in their lives made an incredible impact."(2)

For men who counted the days until the end of their tours, her encouragement and songs sure helped alleviate the loneliness. Yet, it was Chris Noel in person that had the most impact. In December, 1966, "A Date with Chris" went on the air. Shortly afterward, AFRTS sent Noel on the first of several visits to Vietnam. She publicized the show and performed in spots, station ID's and promo's for the in-country stations. Captain Willis Haas was Noel's escort officer. He noted in his after-action report of one 11-day visit, "Miss Noel's visit to Viet Nam was highly productive. She raised the morale of the men whom she visited and generated much good will toward AFRT-VN among the troops."(3)

"I'd talk to them and sign autographs," Chris said. "The job which they created for me in the '60s was very unique." It allowed her to use her ability as a "nurturer." In Viet Nam, she learned that the Viet Cong had put a price on her head because of her morale-boosting program and in-person visits.

"When I was in 'Nam, I was going, going, going, giving, giving, giving, putting out energy. I felt I had to be strong for my men. That's how I looked at them."(4) Her dedication is legendary.

#### **AFVN WARTIME CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES**

The first country-wide live remote television broadcast of "The Bob Hope Christmas Show" occurred on December 28, 1969, from Long Binh. In April, AFVN completed the first in-country, city-to-city (Saigon to My Tho to Vinh Long to Can Tho) microwave transmission system. This enabled AFVN to provide television coverage to servicemen in the Mekong Delta.

A 50-watt repeater transmitter began operation on May 22, giving radio service to the Tuy Hoa area. Television studio facilities became operational at Chu Lai on May 17, and at Qui Nhon on May 26. The latter station also gained a video tape replay capability.

AFVN surveyed more than a thousand U.S. servicemen during the summer of 1970. Reflecting a new generation of G.I. tastes and preferences, the network made nine programming changes. They added more "underground" music on AM radio and increased sports coverage during the football season. FM broadcasts extended to twenty-four hours at the Da Nang station on January 9, 1971.

#### **MORE AFRTS STAFFERS KILLED**

All this service didn't come without a price for AFRTS staffers in Vietnam and at the sister Southeast Asian Network in Thailand. On June 8, 1969, three enlisted men from the Saigon station were killed when their Jeep struck a land mine. The AFVN newsmen had been filming the last episode of a six-part series on the activities of military chaplains in 'Nam.

Then, on April 10, 1970, a crippled F-4 Phantom Jet returning from a mission over Vietnam to its base at Udorn, Thailand, crashed into the second floor of the BOQ. It plowed into the Armed Forces Thailand Network station. The support building and van turned into an inferno.

Nine more AFRTS staffers were killed.

Station manager Jack Lynch escaped death because he'd just gone to the hospital to check out a sore elbow. Hearing the crash, he ran outside to see a column of black smoke rising from the direction of the station.

"I went around the corner and there was just nothing there," he recalled. "Through all that smoke and flame, it looked like the crash just destroyed the whole thing. You could see that there was just not much that could be done at that time." Lynch later discovered that the plane had landed "right on top of my desk! The nose was inside the back door and the tail was inside the front door."(7)

Even before the shock wore off, Lynch and his three surviving staffers began efforts to put the station back on the air. With immediate assistance from their headquarters, they began radio broadcasts within thirty hours, using a signal relayed from Korat. They borrowed two mobile homes that Chase Manhattan Bank had sent to Urban, and began live radio operations within thirty days using equipment sent in from other stations. The station then "jury-rigged" a film-chain-only television setup located in a converted "hootch-type" barracks. It was partially enclosed and air conditioned for the equipment. The temporary facility had no live cameras. Announcers simply read the news over appropriate slides. Meanwhile, efforts went ahead to secure a new television van from existing AFRTS resources. The crash had created an extraordinary crisis.

Yet, the surviving staff at Udom approached the disaster with exemplary dedication and a single goal in mind. They would put the station back on the air as soon as possible.

#### AFRTS THAILAND

By 1970, the Thailand Network, which operated under the jurisdiction of the Air Force, consisted of six manned radio and TV stations and seventeen radio or television relay facilities. AFTN had manned outlets at the headquarters station at Korat, at Nakhon Phanom, Takhli, Ubon, Udom and U-Tapao. The unmanned stations at Samaesan and Vayama provided both radio and television by relay from U-Tapao. The other repeater transmitters provided only radio to small groups of American servicemen.

The radio side of the Thailand operation broadcast twenty-four hours a day using virtually the entire AFRTS package except for the programs designed for dependent children. They supplemented this programming with about eight hours of locally-oriented programs. The television stations operated during the week from three O'clock in the afternoon until Midnight and from 10:00 AM to Midnight on weekends. They used the fifty-five hours of programming included in the AFRTS package and added productions from the station libraries, local spots, news and special events programs. This included a "very vigorous command spot program" that the network felt was "one of the most effective methods for getting the command message across." (5)

Each of the manned TV stations in Thailand began operation using a mobile van flown in completely equipped from the United States. The self-contained vans lacked only power and air conditioning. Each station consisted of complete film chain facilities, audio and video control, associated support equipment and a small studio for live newscasts. The network later constructed a support building at each installation with facilities for the radio operations and another television studio. Eventually, the vans became solely transmitting facilities.

The Thai government expressed concern about the intrusion of American culture among its people. So, the network had to carefully engineer the radiated transmissions from both television and radio to insure that the signal would stay within the confines of the installation. Since few Thais had TV sets with UHF, television presented few problems to the network. Radio signals couldn't be so easily contained and on occasion the government gave stern warnings to the American Embassy about the future of AFTN operation in Thailand. (6)

#### VIETNAM DRAWDOWN

Back in Viet Nam, AFVN faced equally trying, if not as tragic, circumstances in trying to maintain a fully-integrated operation as U.S. Forces began their massive withdrawals

during 1971.

Detachment 7, Chu Lai ceased operating on 20 December 1970. Radio and TV program service continued through a transmitter, which repeated the Da Nang signal. As the troops departed, the network shut down more stations beginning with Tuy Hoa in July and Can Tho in September. Through the implementation of an automatic rebroadcast system, AFVN continued to provide radio and television service to the few remaining forces in both locations. The studio equipment from the deactivated outlets went to other AFRTS operations or returned to the Sacramento Army Depot.

As the drawdown continued, the broadcast detachments relocated and reorganized. Troubleshooting maintenance teams visited each unit at its new location to provide technical support and guidance. Downtime and projected equipment outages decreased. The level of logistical support and the broadcast signals remained strong.

During the relocations, nature, not the enemy, caused a major crisis. On October 23, Typhoon Hester knocked Da Nang off the air for several days. It blew down both the FM and TV towers. Nonetheless, the maintenance teams were able to return FM to the air on October 26, TV on the 28th, and AM on October 29.

The network continued to experience cuts in staff and budget during the year. Still, it maintained its production activities. In December, it provided live television coverage of "The Bob Hope Christmas Show" for the third consecutive year. It distributed both tape and film copies to stations throughout Viet Nam and to the Thailand Network. AFVN also produced a special, "1971: G.I. Christmas," which it sent to all outlets.

As station closings continued, the remaining outlets provided wider coverage. By December, 1971, Hue's radio and television broadcasts reached to the DMZ in the north and to the Hai Van Pass in the south. It was the first time a single station in Viet Nam had covered such a wide area.

Because of a growing security problem, Hue went off the air on February 14, 1972. The Qui Nhon Detachment phased down with the troop redeployments. Radio went off the air on February 14 and television on February 22. The Government of South Viet Nam received the station's equipment.

The reduction in the size of AFVN and relocation of stations continued a pace with the withdrawal of American Forces. Cam Ranh Bay went off the air on April 30. On June 26, its staff began an outlet at Nha Trang.

#### AFVN'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY

During 1972, the work of AFVN became even more important in helping maintain the morale of the remaining troops. On its tenth anniversary, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird congratulated "all personnel, past and

present, of the American Forces Viet Nam Network as it marks its Tenth Anniversary. The dedicated efforts of these hundreds of skilled men and women are well known and appreciated by all who have served in the Republic of Viet Nam. All command levels recognize their efforts as truly professional. Now, as we continue to decrease American involvement in this area of the world, the work of the American Forces Viet Nam Network is no less important. For those thousands who felt a little closer to home because you were there, I thank you for a job well done."

Yet, the end of AFVN was only a matter of time.

On March 23, 1973, Lieutenant Colonel Felix Casipit sent a telegram from Saigon to AFRTS in Washington. He advised that his unit had shipped all retrogradable equipment from Da Nang, Pleiku, Nha Trang, Can Tho, and Cat Lo. The Government of Viet Nam received any remaining material. The final packing of equipment at the Saigon station neared completion. The retrograde of the TV film chain stopped, pending a decision on MACV's request to retain the facility. Casipit laconically closed his telegram:

"AFVN ceased to be as of 2400 hours 22 March 73." A group of DoD civilians established an FM automated

operation on March 23, and designated it American Forces Radio Service Viet Nam.

Still, amongst criticisms and controversy, there would be many more plateaus for armed forces broadcasting to reach.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 21

- (1) Sergeant Major Mike Mason, "POW: Anyone Can Be One," *Soldiers*, October 1983.
- (2) *Washington Post*, November 9, 1984, pp F1,4.
- (3) Captain Willis Haas, Jr. to Chief, Armed Forces Radio and Television, Viet Nam, "Project Report," December 30, 1966.
- (4) *Washington Post*, op cit.
- (5) Richard Risk, "AFTN Briefing," late 1970; Interviews with Gary Sumrall, June 13, 1983; Jack Lynch, January 26, 1984.
- (6) AFN briefing.
- (7) Lynch interview.

## CONTROVERSIES

If the War in Vietnam was anything, it was controversial. Thus, it wasn't surprising that AFVN came under criticism about the way it handled the reporting of the conflict. Criticisms came from the men doing the fighting and from those who supported the combatants.

Even before specific allegations surfaced from the network's own reporters, its audience expressed concerns about differences between AFVN newscasts and others. The Network's 1968 Audience Survey reported that "the problem of exclusion of certain types of news is delicate. Some form of news management, for security reasons, will always be necessary in a combat zone. Unrestricted and unmanaged flow will only provide the enemy with an additional source of intelligence." The Survey also pinpointed the issue, which had been of concern from the earliest days: credibility. "In those cases where no security is involved and where the civilian media are disseminating what might be considered embarrassing news items, their exclusion from military newscasts can only damage the credibility of the outlet."<sup>(1)</sup>

Network news editor Nick Palladino saw the legitimacy of some command security requirements inherent in a combat environment and the need to respect host nation sensitivities. However, Palladino observed that middle echelon officers of MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) manifested excessive zealousness in carrying out their assignment. "Part of the problem was that we were controlled by Major- and Lieutenant Colonel-level people at MACV. They either didn't have the experience or, I guess, an appreciation for news. All they were doing was covering their butts on what they perceived as potentially harmful."<sup>(2)</sup>

From time to time, the news department received lists of words and phrases that the announcers couldn't use in their locally-produced newscasts. Even some quotes required a clearance. Particularly delicate were comments by certain politicians who opposed the war - including Robert Kennedy and Wayne Morse. According to Palladino, these were people who were "consistently negative about the war and the war effort. Their comments would hurt the morale of the troops. MACV wanted the opportunity, not so much to analyze, but to hear what they had to say and to decide whether it was truthful or pertinent."<sup>(3)</sup>

Palladino agreed with MACV and AFRTS guidelines that certain news should be kept off the air. "I understood

that. Everybody at the network headquarters understood it. You couldn't discuss potential coups, for example, when they would come in. That'd be the case in any overseas country. We couldn't discuss stories, which eluded that the President or Vice President (of South Viet Nam) had once been a drug runner, while he was in the Air Force. I understood that. The Vietnamese government would've probably sent somebody and closed us down."<sup>(4)</sup>

The newsman's disagreement with MACV restrictions came on such matters as the editing of President Johnson's comments that the command believed were inaccurate. Palladino was told to delete the President's reference to a terrorist action against a hospital in Da Nang or Na Trang. The officer told him, "As far as we know, that didn't happen. Cut it out." Palladino felt the action was "going overboard," but he obeyed instructions and edited out the remarks before broadcasting the President's comments.<sup>(5)</sup>

"Now, when the President of the United States says something," Palladino said, "it's not my position or anybody in the military's position to say that he's inaccurate. Nor, that we don't like his interpretation, et cetera. That's, to me, just going too far." Even if the President might be wrong, he wondered, "So what? He's still the President. I don't see the point in cutting it out. We have inaccuracies all the time. Once you make one cut, then who is to say that next week someone won't say, 'Well, I don't like his attitude on this issue. Let's cut that out.' You know, you get the ball rolling once you set the precedent."<sup>(6)</sup>

The degree to which MACV attempted to manage the news varied with many factors. These included the U.S. political timing, the war status in-country, the Network Commander and the officers at the command (NACV) who had responsibility for supervising radio and TV.

"We had ups and downs. We had periods when the right people were running the thing and there was a lot more free flow. But we had other periods where it was so restrictive, it was ridiculous," said news editor Palladino.<sup>(7)</sup>

### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

One of the better periods for AFRTS News occurred in the spring of 1967. That's when Secretary of Defense McNamara took pains to reiterate the long-standing DoD regulations mandating freedom of information for American forces around the world. On May 1, 1967, the Secretary addressed the matter in a memorandum to his high military and civilian officials in the Pentagon.

"The public information policy of the Department of Defense demands the maximum disclosure of information except for that which be of material assistance to potential enemies," he said.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs had responsibility for "assuring that nothing inhibits the flow of unclassified information to the American Public. Members of the Armed Forces constitute an important segment of the public. They're entitled to the same unrestricted access to news as are all other citizens. Interference with this access will not be permitted. The calculated withholding of unfavorable news stories and wire service reports from troop information publications such as *Stars and Stripes* is prohibited. So is the censorship of news stories or broadcasts over such outlets as Armed Forces Radio and Television Service."

Within the military itself, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower had the responsibility for taking "all actions necessary to assure a free flow of information to our troops. News management and meddling with the news will not be tolerated, either in external public information or internal troop information."(8)

The Secretary's memo produced a period of relative freedom for AFVN, but by the middle of 1969, MACV was again attempting to impose greater control. In July, nine news branch staffers addressed a written request to the network news chief. They asked about censorship practices and restriction of certain widely accepted terminology in regard to news reports. Their request went unanswered for more than a month. Two of the writers drafted letters to six congressmen asking for their assistance in bringing to an end unjustified news management regarding war news broadcast over the network. By mid-September, only Senator Edmund Muskie had responded and then only with a simple polite acknowledgment.

#### CENSORSHIP IN THE NEWS

On September 17, Specialist Five Michael Maxwell called the CBS News Bureau in Saigon, offering to give an interview. Before the TGV camera, he charged that censorship existed at the Saigon headquarters of AFVN and provided specific examples. One such example was a recent decision of the MACV Office of Information. They had directed that a September 15th announcement by South Viet Nam Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky would not be released. It described a large U.S. troop withdrawal, and Washington had not yet made an official announcement. Although President Nixon's Press Secretary, Ron Ziegler, made the announcement that evening (Saigon time) and AVN reported it the following morning, the network still didn't report Ky's announcement.

More than twenty-four hours after Ky made his statement, President Nixon issued his announcement on the withdrawal. AFVN immediately broadcast it. Interestingly, Vice President Ky had given a different figure

from that of the U.S. President for the number of troops the U.S. intended to withdraw.

Maxwell's appearance on CBS produced a minor controversy.

In response, Representative Chalmers Wylie (R-Ohio) requested an investigation into the matter on behalf of Sp/5 Maxwell, his constituent. Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, responded on October 1 that his committee would be holding hearings and it would keep in mind their complaints.

By mid-October, the MACV Inspector General produced a report of its investigation. The Inspector General recommended AFRTS assign a qualified professional broadcaster as OIC of AFVN. On October 22, Congressman Wylie issued a statement saying that the report particularly pointed out a lack of communication within the AFVN news unit. After the recommendations were implemented, the congressman said he considered the case closed.

If the IG report satisfied the congressman, it produced an entirely different response from Maxwell. He and former AFVN News Chief Randall Moody both considered it biased and a whitewash. Moody, for one, had charged earlier that AFVN was "a propaganda organ rather than the legitimate news disseminating agency it claims to be." He cited the banning of a commercial network news story that had reported a Pentagon investigation of defective armored vests. Network officials had also ordered him not to report corruption in the South Vietnamese Army nor a story about an ARVN soldier who'd shot two American servicemen.

The commander of AFVN, Lieutenant Colonel James Adams, denied that the network ever did any "real censoring" under his command. He explained, "These censorship charges stem primarily from young men who misunderstood our efforts to avoid broadcasting news that would hurt morale or help the enemy."(9)

After leaving the Army, Moody detailed his experience: "I was confronted with the regulation requiring a clearance by the U.S. Command's Information Office." Such offices function as public relations outfits. AFVN news policy, like its stateside counterparts, required judging items of news on their merits as news. Moody felt that the entire AFVN news operation was "hamstrung" by censorship from the U.S. military authorities, the State Department and even the South Vietnamese government.(10)

Moody claimed, "Almost every story that was either critical of the U.S. effort in Viet Nam or tended to embarrass or put MACV in an unfavorable light, was censored!" He recalled a newscast that reported on a Washington press conference in which Secretary of Defense Clark

Clifford called a series of enemy attacks a "third offensive." Ten minutes after the broadcast, the American Embassy press section called to ask about the source of the story. It happened to be a wire service. They asked why the station had used the "third offensive" phrase when the news department knew that regulations prohibited it. The network commander answered that the report was only quoting the Secretary directly.(11)

Whatever the accuracy of Moody's accounts, his criticisms reveal a failure to appreciate that the AFVN was operating in a combat zone. He did not understand the nature of the network and the policies under which it operated. A complete freedom of the press remains the ideal to which AFRTS has always committed itself. Moody was naive to think a radio and television network broadcasting under wartime conditions could enjoy the same freedom of operation as a mainland commercial station. He showed no awareness of the need for AFRTS to respect host nation sensitivities. So, he didn't understand that in deleting stories unfavorable to the Vietnamese government, AFVN wasn't censoring news but simply following necessary AFRTS policy.

Following the issuance of the IG's report, AFVN produced a new set of operating procedures to help clear up any misunderstandings regarding its internal operation. Despite the effort, in the last days of December, still another controversy arose, this time regarding a breach of news policy.

#### CENSORING EDITORIAL

On December 21, 1969, Air Force Sergeant Hugh Morgan ignored Vice President Agnew's criticism of the commercial networks for their instant analysis of presidential speeches. During his intro to an analysis by CBS' Eric Severeid of a speech by President Nixon, Morgan noted that the Severeid's commentary came six days after the President spoke. Within a week Morgan received orders for assignment to the network's Detachment Two in Da Nang.

When queried about it afterward, the network's OIC, Lieutenant Colonel James Adams, suggested that Morgan's transfer was simply a coincidence. The Da Nang station needed a new staffer and AFVN shifted its people quite often. In any case, the story of Morgan's comment and his transfer appeared in the *New York Times* on December 30. It didn't reach Saigon viewers until the 11:00 PM newscast on January 3. Then, breaking away from his normal voice-over narration of news film, Specialist Five Robert Lawrence launched into an emotional appeal against alleged news censorship on the network. "As a newsman, I'm pledged to tell the truth at all times, and I'll always tell the truth either in the military or as a civilian. In the military in Viet Nam, I've found that

a newscaster isn't free to tell the truth."(12)

Lawrence's comments precipitated immediate reactions both in Viet Nam and in Washington. AFVN reported the announcer's action on its 3:00 AM radio newscast the next morning. Later in the day, Lawrence was questioned by the MACV Inspector General. He was served courtmartial charges on an unrelated incident and then reassigned as a chaplain's assistant in Kontum Province in the Central Highlands, leaving behind a growing controversy.

Senator Joseph Tydings (D-MD) asked the Air Force to reinstate the airman, his constituent. Representative John Moss, Chairman of the House Foreign Operations and Government Information Subcommittee, announced that he'd conduct his own investigation into the censorship allegations. He had previously scheduled a trip to Viet Nam to look into information problems in MACV and would add this to his agenda.(13)

Meanwhile, in Viet Nam, the MACV Inspector General conducted another investigation of the alleged censorship following the Lawrence episode. On January 28, 1970, the IG concluded that the network was operating within the guidelines established by DoD policy and no censorship existed.

The report examined AFVN's mission in Viet Nam and network news policy that determined which stories actually went on the air.

"The mission of the network is to inform U.S. military personnel. This mission also includes the responsibility of not misinforming," it said. The IG observed that the network had "the inherent responsibility in the combat zone not to release or broadcast information that would be of value to the enemy." The report declared that "host nation sensitivity" remained a primary consideration in determining what any AFRTS station could broadcast. "Material that would offend the host country cannot be used. This does not, however, prohibit the use of material that is simply unfavorable to the host country." The investigation revealed "that considerable commentary unfavorable to the Republic of Viet Nam was originated by commercial sources. Using such material led to the conclusion that the material had not been arbitrarily eliminated because it may have been unfavorable to the host country."(14)

Congressman Moss's committee also found AFVN innocent of censorship. It concluded that some instances had existed of news management or at least the exercise of poor judgment in the handling of news in Viet Nam.

The complaints of staffers and the controversies that swirled around the network news operation were understandable, if not somewhat predictable. After all, the network was operating in a combat theater and under the jurisdiction of a sovereign nation. Surely, the idealism of

young journalists would one day clash with the military's need to control information that might prove useful to the enemy. Those who complained about the suppression of news may not have understood AFRTS' need to balance its news with a respect for host nation sensitivity.

#### HOST NATION SENSITIVITY

AFRTS' right to broadcast on foreign soil has always remained one of its major achievements. In order to preserve the agreements permitting the access to the required frequencies, AFRTS has had to exercise care in respecting the sensitivities of host nations. This is true even in countries whose governments often survive only because of support from the United States. The local AFRTS operations have always done everything possible to insure that nothing in the programs they broadcast would offend the people and their local traditions. If all AFRTS programs went out via cable, or didn't radiate beyond the perimeters of the bases, then AFRTS would have no problem.

Fortunately, in many countries, the staffs don't have to deal with host nation sensitivities. Either the local people and governments are open to criticism or the American TV and radio signal is not compatible with the local format. Where the local population can watch or listen to AFRTS programming, the sensitivity issue becomes important.

Colonel David Cole was the Commander of the AFRTS Broadcast Center from 1981 to 1986. He pointed out that the programming is going out "on public airwaves in a country in which we are guests. The host nation folks are often watching and listening right along with our audience. We must use care not to embarrass the host people and government, or in the extreme, to influence elements that support the overthrow of it. The host government owns the frequencies. Our right to broadcast is dependent on its approval."

#### NO CENSORING AT AFRTS-BC

The AFRTS Broadcast Center doesn't censor material before distributing it. Cole explains, "We merely screen the material distributed on tape and audio disc. Then we advise AFRTS networks and stations that material coming their way might prove sensitive to the host nation. We have no way of screening radio and TV materials sent live by SATNET.

"The United States Embassy in each nation has the responsibility for deciding what subjects the local government might find offensive. In rare instances where we spot a sensitivity in a program, the AFRTS station manager or network commander checks with the local U.S. Embassy. The Embassy representative determines whether the material is appropriate for airing." (15)

In Arab countries, for example, AFRTS didn't broadcast news about Israel for many years. Outlets even deleted reference to "Jews." In 1964, an airman stationed at Wheelus Air Base in Libya complained that the local AFRTS station didn't mention "Jews" in its programming. After receiving the complaint and communicating with the military about the matter, Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY) heard from the Air Force that the charges were true. However, the Service denied that the action was censorship but rather represented normal AFRTS policy of deleting program material that might be objectionable to a host country. Nonetheless, Javits made his point. By the mid-1980s, AFRTS no longer had a "policy limiting information/news about the State of Israel on AFRTS broadcasts anywhere in the world." (16)

#### LIVE FEEDS ON SATNET

SATNET brought a whole new dimension to AFRTS. It also brought new problems in countries such as Korea and the Philippines where the host governments are particularly sensitive to criticism. Before the widespread use of the satellite, the AFRTS networks or local outlets produced their own nightly news programs. This allowed the news staffs time to consider stories that might present problems to the host government. With SATNET, AFRTS feeds live CNN and other U.S. commercial network newscasts directly from the United States every day. In most countries, AFRTS stations can select any feed and use it live. In the Philippines, the people there were very sensitive to criticism of Marcos and his family during his rule. So, the AFRTS outlet had to tape the evening news and look for host nation sensitivity before airing it. Once Marcos left, the problem went away.

AFRTS faced a similar problem during President Reagan's visit to Korea in 1983. In its coverage of the trip, "NBC Nightly News" did a critical report on the Seoul government, calling it "repressive." AFKN, which might normally have used an NBC news feed received from SATNET, substituted another network's evening news to avoid offending the Seoul government. Cole stressed that this was a State Department call and didn't constitute censorship. "AFRTS did not withhold items critical to our form of government or the present administration. That would never be allowed. The Broadcast Center staff in Los Angeles does not look at an item as pro- or anti-administration or supportive or non-supportive of U.S. or DoD policy. If the American public has access to the material, we pass it on to the Armed Forces overseas just as we originally receive it. If a story is possibly offensive to the local host nation, we notify the station that the Embassy may consider withholding it." (18)

Each year, the AFRTS Broadcast Center requests that Embassies provide an updated list of sensitive subjects for

each country. AFRTS-BC makes sure to inform its outlets when program material contains any of these subjects. Even if an item is withheld from use, *Stars and Stripes*, the armed forces newspaper, serves as backup to AFRTS and usually covers the story in great depth. With its circulation limited primarily to military facilities, Cole says the paper is not subject to the same host nation sensitivities. (19)

The success which AFRTS broadcasters have had in resisting efforts to dictate program content has varied, largely depending on the support they received from their officers in charge.

#### CENSORING HIT SONGS WITH HOT LYRICS

During his tenure in the mid-1960s as Commander of AFRTS Los Angeles, Air Force Colonel Robert Eby received a message from the Captain in charge of the Caribbean Network. He complained about the content of many of the songs included in the radio package. In essence, the Captain told Eby that he found several lyrics not acceptable to his audience. He intended to set up a screening committee to decide which records he'd put on the air. In response, Eby gathered the radio production people in his office to listen to some of the music.

While producers admitted that some of the lyrics were probably questionable, no one had taken time to listen carefully to the words. They were too hard to understand, often sounding just like "a montage of different voices." When Eby listened to the records, he was shocked by the words of "one of the better, softer" songs by a popular group. The song not only protested going to Vietnam, but encouraged, as a young man's alternative to military service, staying home and making love to his friend's mother. Despite such lyrics, Eby knew he "had a delicate problem" if he attempted to ban the songs from the AFRTS package. He'd certainly hear cries of censorship. Plus, keeping popular songs from servicemen overseas would be violating the AFRTS mission. That is, to provide the troops with the same entertainment that was available back home.

Eby went to the major Los Angeles radio stations. He discussed the problem with their program directors. From each of them, Eby received a list of records that they'd decided met acceptable community standards. He then consolidated the list into a master chart from which the AFRTS radio producers could construct their programs. If questioned again about a selection AFRTS included in its package, he had a ready answer. "We're only doing what the better stations of Los Angeles are doing." (20)

#### AFRTS' JURISDICTION ESTABLISHED

This approach contrasted significantly with incidents that occurred in Viet Nam and later in Spain. In the

summer of 1971, Lieutenant Colonel Laurence Souville, the Officer-in-Charge of AFVN, banned the hit song "Bring the Boys Home." He took offense to the phrase, "everybody oughtta lay your weapons down." AFRTS-LA had included the Freda Payne song as part of its radio package to all outlets. Colonel Souville's unilateral action kept the song from being played on AFVN.(21)

Likewise, in 1976, the Commanding Officer of the Naval Station at Rota, Spain, attempted to keep a hit song off the airwaves. Although AFRTS is not under a base commander's jurisdiction, this officer's efforts illustrated the problems AFRTS outlets have faced in maintaining their independence and control of their programming.

Navy Lieutenant Paul Hanson enjoyed a good working relationship with the first two Naval Station Commanders. Their tours coincided with his while he was OIC of the Air Force-operated radio outlet and later as the PAO for Commander of Naval Activities Spain.(22) With the arrival in Rota of Captain Charles Roe, the new Navy Commander in 1976, things began to change. Captain Roe began calling the OIC at night at home to report complaints about the station and the programming.

One day, according to Hanson, "the crap hit the fan so to speak" over two novelty songs on the Wolfman Jack and Charley Tuna disc jockey shows. They were included in the AFRTS library package. One was "Don't Touch Me There," by the Tubes. "The Shaving Cream Song" was the other. Roe immediately complained to Hanson about the two songs.

He also objected to some spots the station had produced urging people to save water because of a severe drought. One of the suggested saving water by not flushing toilets all the time, while another said that without conservation, the only available water might soon be in the toilet tank. The campaign had been very successful. Roe found the latter spot, in particular, "disgusting, revolting and immoral" because he claimed it suggested people would be forced to drink water out of a toilet bowl. Even though Hanson pointed out that the spot said "tank," not "bowl," the Commander insisted he take it off the air. The Station Director acceded. However, he didn't order the novelty songs off the air. Fortunately, novelty records quickly lose their popularity. They'd soon disappear from the entertainment package.

Paul Anka's "You're Having My Baby" created problems for Hanson that didn't disappear so easily. Containing allusions to premarital sex, pregnancy and abortion, the song quickly became a top-ten hit, and so found its way into the AFRTS library package. When Roe heard the song, he called Hanson into his office. He prohibited him from playing it on the station. "I don't want to hear that damn song, that damn immoral song on the radio again!" he said.

Hanson informed the Captain that while he could direct his own disc jockeys not to play the song, DoD regulations forbade him to remove it from the AFRTS programs. Roe said, "I don't care what they say, I am telling you to take that song off the air!"

Hanson tried to explain that the only way to remove the song was to have AFRTS-LA label it as sensitive to the host nation. They would have to remove it from the package sent to the three Air Force-run stations in Spain. This probably wouldn't happen since Spanish radio stations were also playing the song. Hanson agreed to take the song off his own programs, but repeated that he could do nothing with the AFRTS programs. This didn't satisfy the Base Commander. A few days later, Hanson found himself removed from his job and reassigned to Air Traffic Control. The station never broadcast Anka's record again.

As a Navy officer operating an Air Force-controlled radio station, Hanson had little recourse through the Air Force. The Navy Broadcasting Service had only recently come into existence and was still primarily concerned with bringing radio and television service to ships. It was only just beginning to take over land-based broadcast operations assigned to the Navy.

Preparing to accept his fate, Hanson called Jordan Rizer, the head of the newly-organized Navy Broadcasting Service. He advised him that he'd received orders. He'd no longer be the Navy's contact in negotiations to bring television to Spain.(23)

At that point the matter became more than simply the efforts to censor one song on one AFRTS radio station. Rizer took the matter to Rear Admiral David Cooney, Navy Chief of Information, who'd worked closely with him in the creation of the Navy Broadcasting Service. Cooney was a strong defender of the prerogatives of his public affairs community and, along with Rizer, saw Hanson's transfer as a jurisdictional matter. First he argued that Hanson could not be reassigned without the authority of the Chief of Information. Second, he raised the question of censorship of DoD-furnished materials, copyright and music industry agreements with AFRTS. Both men began efforts through Navy channels to reverse the Rota commander's actions. When listeners at Rota discovered what had happened, they, too, wrote to their congressmen complaining about the censorship of a popular song by the base commander.

A meeting of senior Navy Commanders in Europe happened to be scheduled in Rota. There, several Admirals took Roe aside and made it clear to him that they were tired of this controversy. They told him to settle the matter, immediately. When Hanson returned from thirty-days leave, the Captain offered him his old job back. Hanson tried to turn down the reassignment on the

grounds he had only thirty days left in-country. The Captain gave him no choice.

Of course, by then, "You're Having My Baby" was no longer on the top 40 list.(24)

Through the efforts of "Buzz" Rizer, Admiral Cooney and Robert Cranston, the Director of the American Forces Information Service, Hanson's career never suffered from his efforts to keep control of his station's broadcast material. More important, the incident also helped to insure the jurisdiction of the Navy Broadcasting Service over its personnel. It gave them independence in their operations and an ability to resist the efforts of outsiders to dictate the programming. With the Navy Broadcasting Service, and later the Air Force and Army Broadcasting Services in place, station managers reported directly to those who assigned them. Because they could obtain support when they needed it, they would avoid the problems Hanson faced.

While efforts to censor music may not seem comparable with the attempts to manage or censor news, the principle remains the same. Any denial of news, information or entertainment available to Americans at home damages the credibility of the entire broadcast operation. Censorship also adversely affects its mission. The efforts to ban certain songs from the air are usually more obvious than censorship of news. Therefore, it is easier to deal with bans or music than are threats to the unfettered delivery of news. It's in the news area that AFRTS has been more susceptible to interference. News controversies are more difficult to resolve than by simply enforcing DoD directives or supporting station commanders.

AFRTS has denied charges of censorship whenever they've arisen. Only the requirements of military security or host nation sensitivity are possible reasons for suppressing stories that've appeared stateside. The nature of operating constraints on AFRTS has contributed to the perception that it hasn't always provided a free flow of unbiased news to its listeners.

## PROPAGANDA AND CENSORED NEWS

In 1963, the agency also suffered a loss of credibility when a superior authority directed it to broadcast a program which listeners immediately recognized as propaganda. AFRTS received unquestionable instructions mandating that it air a USIA-produced news analysis program. Since AFRTS had a much wider audience and greater credibility than did the Voice of America, Edward R. Murrow, then head of USIA, approached the Defense Department. He asked that Armed Forces Radio accept for mandatory broadcast, two five-minute news analyses each week day. AFRTS objected. The programs contained propaganda and violated the organization's long cherished mission of providing news

untainted with government "messages" to American forces overseas.(25)

John Broger, then the director of the Defense Department's Office of Information and Education, the parent organization of AFRTS, explained. "The mission and purpose of American Forces Radio and Television and USIA are drastically dissimilar. AFRTS provides news, information and entertainment to military personnel overseas. USIA is primarily an instrument of U.S. foreign policy."

Nevertheless, on February 5, 1963, a higher authority, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, agreed to accept the USIA material. "It's my desire to disseminate this official information to all U.S. military personnel abroad," he said. "Each Armed Forces Radio Station will broadcast these programs as received." The only exception to this order was to be in "those countries where written agreements with the host government prohibit this type of official U.S. broadcast."(26)

AFRTS had no choice.

The program, entitled "Today's Analysis of Events from Washington," began on February 11, 1963, and aired on all outlets except in France, which did object to the content. In an effort to make the program more palatable to listeners, Broger reached an agreement with USIA. He'd personally screen every segment "since there were obvious sensitivities that superseded their sensitivities, and relationships with local governments which were the basis of our franchise to broadcast in that particular country. If there was some problem in the screening, we were to be able to discuss it with them and have a correction made."(27)

Robert Cranston, who later replaced Broger as director of the newly-renamed American Forces Information Service (AFIS), was at the time the commander of AFN. He rejected a USIA claim that the program was being broadcast so that servicemen would receive better news than AFRTS provided. "It was a subterfuge to say that the program was broadcast to the American forces as being the only news they needed to hear. The main target was really the eavesdroppers, the shadow audience. Everybody knew the real reason for the program."

AFRTS and its audience were not alone in their dissatisfaction with the decision to carry the program. WTOP Radio and Television in Washington, D.C., began an editorial campaign against the USIA effort. On April 22, 1963, the station observed that Congress had created the USIA as an information service, not "an instrument for propagandizing the American people themselves." The station observed, "Today's Analysis' can't be broadcast to American troops in the United States. Why, then, shouldn't the same prohibition apply to troops on overseas duty?"

Again, on October 28, 1963, the station editorialized, "The USIA was specifically created to present the American point of view to foreigners overseas. That's its only proper function. Yet, USIA is creeping into the business of propagandizing the people of this country. One manifestation is the use of USIA news commentary by American Forces Network stations in Europe, stations operated primarily for the benefit of American service personnel and their families." WTOP concluded that "the USIA should get out of the business of supplying any form of material to armed forces stations. It should restrict its activities solely and exclusively to overseas, non-American audiences. That is its only legitimate function."

WTOP's strong position against the USIA programming on AFRTS outlets was not surprising. The president of its parent organization, the Post-Newsweek Stations, was none other than John Hayes, the first commander of AFN. Writing to John Seigenthaler, Editor of the *Nashville Tennessean*, Hayes explained. "We'd find ourselves like *Alice in Wonderland* if we stated that an American living in Nashville should be exposed to a Government attempt to influence his free exercise of thought. Especially, if we then have him exposed to precisely this type of danger because he becomes a member of the American Armed Forces, and is stationed in Europe in company with thousands of his compatriots."(29)

The WTOP Editorial Board hadn't entered into the controversy lightly. "We are quite convinced of the correctness of our position, and we do intend to persist in it."

Neither the media nor the internal dissent was able to change the USIA decision. The USIA programming continued for four years until 1967. Then, the new director of the agency, Leonard Marks, advised Secretary of Defense McNamara, "I've recently reviewed this arrangement, and I feel that it has outlived its usefulness. Accordingly, I'm terminating this service effective March 15."(30)

While Broger did not know the reason for the change by the USIA, he "assumed that the reason was an effort to enhance USIA credibility."(31)

AFRTS had little or no power to avoid such outside intrusions on its operations. Another case in point occurred at AFN in October, 1967,

#### MILITARY CENSORSHIP

William Slatter, the managing editor of AFN and deputy to Network News Director David Myrnatt, addressed a press luncheon in Frankfurt on the 27th. There, he complained that AFN editors were hampered in reporting certain news dealing with U.S. forces in Europe without first obtaining clearance from the military chain

of command. For instance, AFN could not broadcast a news story of graft in the European Exchange System for some 26 hours. They had to wait until the EES had prepared a statement of its own on the charges. A superior told him that he saw "no harm done" in waiting a day. To Slatter, however, the issue centered on whether AFN could "let the accused party control the news." He wondered "what AFN would have done if the EES had not issued a statement for four or five days!"(32)

Slatter had been at AFN for only three months. He'd left his job as news editor at WDSU-TV in New Orleans, because he wanted to give his family a chance to live in Europe.(33)

David Mynatt attributed Slatter's charges to a lack of understanding of the differences between commercial and military broadcasting. "He's an experienced, capable newsman and a fine managing editor," Mynatt said. Yet, he added that Slatter had "not been in Europe long enough to understand the uniquely sensitive position of a military-operated news medium in a foreign land." (34)

After Secretary McNamara issued his memorandum prohibiting "meddling with the news," Colonel Louis Breault, Chief of Public Affairs at Headquarters, USAREUR, sought to refute Slatter's contentions. "Slatter's allegations are ridiculous. If we at Heidelberg exert any influence over AFN at all it is in the direction of accuracy and integrity." (35)

Breault didn't challenge Slatter's claims that stories sometime experienced delays. That, he admitted. Yet, he contended, "By regulation AFN is not intended to be the mouthpiece of any command, individual or group," suggesting that such delays were normal and acceptable.(36)

Slatter hadn't realized that a difference existed in AFN from what he was used to as a newsman in commercial broadcasting. Instead of being news gatherers, AFN journalists acted primarily as reporters and editors of others' news stories. He "was somewhat surprised and a little irritated to find out that certain stories couldn't go on. You had to first in effect, clear them with the Heidelberg authorities." To him, this represented a "form of restriction that I was unfamiliar with in any other organization I'd worked for."(37)

Slatter saw stories all around him, "Army life in a foreign country, and they appeared to me to deserve some real coverage." While Mynatt did allow him to initiate some stories and do some interviewing, he had to clear his plans with his boss and the Commanding Officer of AFN. He recalled that his fellow journalists "were a little bit nervous about what was going to happen. This was out of their norm, which was nothing more than disseminating news from the AP and UPI wire services." It was the requirement to have his stories reviewed by his

superiors that motivated Slatter's speech at the press luncheon.(38)

Ironically, AFRTS in Washington wondered why it took so long for the Armed Forces News Bureau to put the Slatter story on the air. AFNB had received the story from UPI at 7:55 pm EDT on October 26. However, the story was not broadcast until 12:30 AM on the 27th. Then, AFNB shortwaved a five-minute ABC broadcast that included about an eight-second story.(39)

An investigation concluded that the original story "should have been used in part or in its entirety immediately. The Chief of AFNB should have monitored this item more closely because of its nature."(40)

#### A CALL FOR JUDGMENT BY AFRTS

Secretary McNamara read an account of Slatter's remarks. His allegations seemed to run counter to McNamara's May 1 memorandum reiterating that there should be no restriction on news reaching the troops. McNamara immediately dispatched two Colonels to AFN to investigate. Colonel Robert Cranston headed the team. The two officers found no clear-cut case of censorship but attributed Slatter's allegations of censorship to faults of the system rather than attempts to brainwash the troops. The investigators also produced a set of recommendations for Secretary McNamara. They intended to insure that the network would be free to report all the news that was fit to broadcast.(41)

The degree to which such recommendations or DoD memorandums succeed in allowing AFRTS stations to operate unfettered has depended on the stations' ability to maintain their independence from outside pressures. With the creation of the three broadcasting services (Army, Navy and Air Force), independent from local control, the broadcasters' jobs have become easier.

Since AFRTS is the sole source of news, information and entertainment for many troops, its stations have many available sources from which to program a limited number of hours. This requires judgments by the staff. Such judgments leave it open to criticism and sometimes a need to reverse a decision.

When the program "The A-Team" first appeared, the Broadcast Center decided against acquiring broadcast rights to it. The staff concluded its violence and comic-book style wouldn't find a wide audience. When the program became a hit in the U.S., AFRTS went ahead and aired the series. Conversely, the Broadcast Center chose not to acquire the rights to the three-hour ABC documentary on atomic energy. ABC proposed to broadcast it along with the 40th anniversary of the use of the first atomic bombs. Here, AFRTS made another judgment, but not solely because of subject matter. The program was of poor quality. Its audience rating in the U.S. was low,

and it's three-hour length would have disrupted programming schedules.

#### AFRTS RETAINS ITS CREDIBILITY

From its early days, AFRTS has been committed to full news coverage and a total rejection of propaganda. Even amidst the controversies, AFRTS still provides its audiences with "a little bit of home," the same news and entertainment they'd receive in the United States. Efforts continue to correct abuses when they appear. Notwithstanding, criticisms such as those made by Bill Slatter usually come from a misunderstanding of the AFRTS mission rather than a deliberate effort to suppress unfavorable news. What may be most surprising to the uninitiated is the willingness of AFRTS to include in its schedules, programs critical to the military. For instance, CBS's controversial programs "The Selling of the Pentagon" and "Viet Nam: The Uncounted Enemy" went overseas as a matter of course. So did the ABC antiwar drama "The Day After."

In the end, AFRTS can't please all members of its audiences all the time. Military security and sensitivity to host nations may sometimes force AFRTS to delete certain programming - even news stories. Nonetheless, over many years, AFRTS has maintained an extraordinary credibility for most of its audience.

AFRTS has attracted a steady and significant "shadow" audience over the years. That accomplishment may well be the best testament yet to the level of objectivity and freedom from propaganda with which AFRTS has operated.

And, it's done it all for more than a half-century.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 22

- (1) AFVN Audience Opinion—Research and Analysis, January 1969, p. 56.
- (2) Interview with Nick Palladino, November 22, 1985.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Secretary of Defense memorandum, Subject: Freedom of Information, May 1, 1967.
- (9) *The New York Times*, October 2, 1969, p 16.

- (10) Randall Moody, "Preserving the Image in Viet Nam," *Freedom of Information Center Report No. 0010*, University of Missouri School of Journalism pamphlet, August 1979, p 3.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) *New York Times*, December 30, 1969, p 21; January 4, 1970, p 3; January 5, 1970, p 1; *Stars and Stripes (Pacific)*, January 5, 1970, p 6.
- (13) *Washington Post*, January 29, 1979, p 15; *New York Times*, January 11, 1970, sec IV, p. 5.
- (14) IG Report, January 28, 1985.
- (15) Interview with Colonel David Cole, July 17, 1985.
- (17) Cole Interview.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) Interview with Robert Eby, Sept. 29, 1982.
- (21) *Providence Journal*, July 17, 1971.
- (22) Interview with Paul Hanson, December 24, 1983.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Hanson Interview; Interview with Admiral David Cooney, Jan. 10, 1983; Interview with Jordan Rizer, Oct. 12, 17, 1983.
- (25) Interview with John Broger, April 8, 1984; Interview with Henry Valentino, Feb. 10, 1984; Interview with Robert Cranston, Sept. 15, 1983.
- (26) John Broger to the Library of Congress, Feb. 19, 1975; Robert McNamara to the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, Feb. 5, 1963.
- (27) Broger interview.
- (28) Cranston interview.
- (29) John S. Hayes to John Seigenthaler, Nov. 22, 1963.
- (30) Leonard Marks to Robert McNamara, n.d., March 1967.
- (31) Broger to Secretary Morris, March 13, 1967.
- (32) *Stars and Stripes*, Oct. 27, 1967, pp 1, 24.
- (33) Interview with William Slatter, Aug 22, 1983.
- (34) *Stars and Stripes*, Oct 28, 1967, pp 1, 24.
- (35) Ibid, stories of October 27 and 28.
- (36) Ibid, October 28.
- (37) Slatter interview.
- (38) Ibid.
- (39) AFNB Operations Notice and attachments, Oct. 27, 1967.
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) *The Overseas Weekly*, Nov. 12, 1967, p. 5.

## THE AFRTS BROADCAST CENTER

The 1970s and 1980s brought great changes to AFRTS, in organization, in programming and in program delivery. New technology evolved. New chains of command developed. Yet, it was the program packages, the "programming," that remained the heart of the operation.

Without a doubt, AFRTS enjoyed its greatest period for creating programming during World War II. Yet, when the fighting stopped, entertainers became less and less available or willing to appear on AFRTS-produced shows for free. Funding diminished. Without financing, the reductions in production became inevitable. Radio service phased out most of its creative activities. Television changed directions as well. The AFRTS renamed their Los Angeles programming arm the "Broadcast Center" in 1966.

In the early days, the AFRTS Programming Center in Los Angeles produced and delivered in-house shows like "Command Performance," "Mail Call" and "Jubilee." By the 1980s, however, the AFRTS entertainment packages contained pretty much the same commercial network or syndicated programming which was available to audiences in the United States. The creativity that did exist in Hollywood involved the production of programs that contained informational, educational and patriotic themes. In other words, those, which justified their expense.

Over the years, these latter productions also disappeared. That left AFRTS radio with only regularly-produced disc jockey programs like the Charlie Tuna, Wolfman Jack and the Gene Price show. While some entertainment production continued in radio, AFRTS never seriously considered producing its own entertainment shows for TV.

Even though AFRTS divorced itself from the program production business, the need for state-of-the-art programming for both radio and TV continued to be crucial. A great variety of programming was available from the commercial networks. Therefore, this effort didn't require the same type of artistic prowess that produced a "Command Performance," "The Bill Cosby Show" or even "The A-Team." For better or worse, that "look and feel" of stateside television became a fundamental characteristic of AFRTS programming. Because it was often the only game in town, the AFRTS outlets had to program to meet

the needs of a widely diverse audience. These audiences ranged from senior officers to the youngest enlisted man or woman, and from generals' spouses to the wives and children of the enlisted men, all official members of the AFRTS audience.

That's a significant challenge.

### HOW PROGRAMMING REACHES THE TROOPS

On the television side, AFRTS programmers in the Broadcast Center select programming from the commercial networks, e.g., ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC. They also work with PBS and agreements to air programming also exist with major cable networks like CNN, ESPN, USA and others. Favorable agreements also exist with the shows produced by major "indies," the independent stations. It's an extraordinary volume of the world's best English-language offerings in television, and it's what has made AFRTS so valuable to command and to morale of U.S. troops. Managing a balanced package of these top-rated shows along with the necessary command information and education - "Rosanne" with "Americana" for example - requires an artistry of its own. No doubt, this includes at least a thorough knowledge of the complicated business of programming. While the primary responsibility for delivering all this good programming rests with the Broadcast Center, the evolution of what the soldier finally sees comes from the individual stations. Major influences come from the audience and from the network's or station's own programming experience and feedback the network or station manager's style. For example, rather than broadcast "CNN News" continuously, the station manager might first emphasize command information programming. He might follow that with segments of CNN's production augmenting his own locally-produced newscast. Then, in the wee hours, the station might rely on the Broadcast Center's work entirely, figuratively "flipping the switch" to a straight, unmodified feed at the day's end. Then they'd switch back to the first station-customized show the next morning.

Functioning under DoD Directive 5120.20, the AFRTS Broadcast Center has the mission of negotiating for, procuring and distributing radio and television materials. It also supports the free flow of news, information and entertainment without censorship, propagandizing or manipulation. While not formally contained in the mission statement, the Broadcast Center's job is, of course, to help overseas Commanders sustain morale and enhance readiness. By improving their quality of life, AFRTS-BC contributes to both a more motivated military and higher retention rates.

As one means of aiding the outlets, the Broadcast Center continually scouts for new sources of programming, these

days that often means from the rapidly growing cable television industry.

It also seeks rights to movies. Complicating the problem is the troops' large appetite for movies and the risque content of today's feature movies. In 1984, the Broadcast Center distributed more than 400 feature films. That's more than the average number of Hollywood releases in a year! At the same time, the film industry went more toward the production of "R"-rated motion pictures which AFRTS can't use until the Broadcast Center has edited them. AFRTS movies must meet community standards as determined by the commercial networks and the editors of in-flight movies for airlines. Because of this trend away from family entertainment, it became increasingly difficult for the BC to fill its movie needs. According to the October 18, 1985, issue of *Variety*, more than half (50.3%) of all films produced between 1968 and 1985 had an "X" or "R" rating.

With the increased demand for programming, AFRTS also had to produce a proportionally greater number of spot announcements to replace the deleted ads.

The production and procurement of spots became a DoD-level function. With less than seven hundred television spots in the inventory and more than seven thousand availabilities to fill each week during 1984, repetition became unavoidable. DoD began to "farm out" contracts for more production of internal information spots. To add emphasis without over-exposure, DoD assigned "impact values" or weights to the spots it used. According to Colonel David Cole, AFRTS-BC Commander from 1981-1985, "what was needed was a greater inventory - some of which might come from topical material produced by local stations."(6)

#### THE LARGEST RADIO AND TELEVISION NETWORK IN THE WORLD

To meet this mission, the Broadcast Center (then the Programming Center) had a staff of ninety-six civilians and a joint service force of forty-five military people. In addition, the Navy provided an eight-man detachment to support the unique requirements of the Navy. In fiscal year 1985, the PC had a budget of \$27.9 million. That enabled AFRTS to reach an audience of over 1.2 million. This audience included active duty military personnel, DoD civilians, and family members in forty-five countries, fifteen U.S. territories or possessions, and aboard Navy ships at sea. By the middle of 1985, AFRTS had become the largest radio and television network in the world.

A primary target audience for AFRTS is active duty personnel in the 18-25 year age group. Most have a high school education. Many are away from home for the first time and often lack the motivation and money to go off-base and enjoy the advantages of an overseas assignment.

There is always a temptation for this group to seek relief from loneliness and boredom in alcohol or drug use. So, the BC makes a special effort to provide the kind of programming they like. The aim is that "AFRTS, not alcohol, will be the after-duty diversion of choice."

#### THE "SHADOW" AUDIENCE

The AFRTS outlets have always attracted a significant "shadow" audience. U.S. civilians living abroad and citizens of host nations listen to or watch the American programming. Some do so as a source of information and entertainment. Others watch or listen as an aid in developing an English language capability. Still others do so out of curiosity about the American life-style. DoD has never officially established a firm count of the non-American listeners. Yet, a study in Japan indicated that twenty-one percent of the local population - or 25-million people - tuned in to AFRTS radio at least once a week! The official U. S. position has always been that such "shadow audiences" are spillover. AFRTS has always considered their viewer- or listener-ship as superfluous to their objective. Therefore, AFRTS does not program for the shadow audience. It doesn't even consider it in the selection of broadcast material. Only in a case of host nation sensitivity does AFRTS ever pay attention to the foreign listening audience.

The Broadcast Center has always based its decisions about programs on the DoD audiences. Overseas outlets periodically conduct audience surveys and send the results to Los Angeles. The BC maintains contact with AFRTS network and the station program directors and talks with senior public affairs officers in the field. They in turn talk with their commanders. They combine this information with that of the various rating services (i.e., Arbitron, Nielsen, et al) and newspaper and magazine program reviews. Then, they determine what material will go into the programming packages.

When AFRTS has compared these inputs, the results weren't surprising. The troops abroad still want "a little bit of home" - the same shows that are popular stateside. So, the Broadcast Center has accommodated them. During the 1984-85 television season, the BC acquired and distributed 93.4 percent of all network prime-time series and every one of the 35 most popular series as ranked by A.C. Nielsen. In addition, the Center acquired all winners of the "Alpha" awards for excellence in children's programming.

AFRTS-BC committed to providing a good representation of stateside programming, not just the most popular stuff. During the course of the year, they broadcast all manner of programming. That included programs of particular interest to minority groups and even religious programming. Often, most of the military audiences

abroad had no alternative source of English language television programming.

In accomplishing its mission, the Broadcast Center avoids targeting any particular audience segment exclusively. It works instead to provide a cross-section of material that will have appeal to most, if not all, of its audience.

The BC's staff does not exclude a program or a series simply because the subject matter is controversial. It doesn't shy away from a viewpoint just because it may differ from that of the current administration in the White House. Its primary consideration is simple. Has the program aired in the United States? If people back home have had an opportunity to see or hear the material, the personnel overseas should have the same opportunity.

#### **PRIME-TIME PROGRAMMING**

Once AFRTS-BC decides to acquire a program or series, their actual success in obtaining it depends on several things. One is funding. During 1985, AFRTS had \$9.9 million allocated for acquisition and duplication. The Broadcast Center benefited from the continuing favorable rates, which the television networks, independent producers and program distributors have historically granted to the military. It continued to enjoy a total waiver of fees, which the broadcast guilds and entertainment unions impose on commercial broadcasters.

Their efforts, especially in view of the volume and excellence of their work, are very cost-efficient. For example, one independent television station in Los Angeles may pay \$120,000 to broadcast a single episode of "Magnum P.I." That's for rights within their local area. AFRTS pays \$1,470 to distribute the same show worldwide. A major United States network may pay up to \$900,000 an hour for network-wide use of a popular show. AFRTS still pays only \$1,470.

Despite this cooperation by its program sources, AFRTS has at times experienced delays in acquiring materials because commercial distributors wanted first to market their programs and movies overseas. U.S. nations where a local television system is compatible with the AFRTS and broadcast standard (NTSC), the distributor has often restricted particular programs until it could exploit the commercial value of the program. The most recent restriction problems of this nature occurred in Panama and Korea. To compensate, the AFRTS Broadcast Center sent special supplemental programming to these networks to help offset the loss in their weekly program packages.

#### **EIGHT CENTS ON THE DOLLAR**

About 63 percent of AFRTS programming comes from the commercial networks. It consists primarily of news and sports. Except for an annual administrative cost clearing

individual programs, AFRTS-BC receives these programs for free. The balance of the programming comes from the distributors and producers who market most of the entertainment, and some of the sports programming, in the United States. AFRTS pays a standard rate for most of these programs. Conservative estimates place the value of television programs AFRTS distributed during 1984 at more than \$117 million when compared with regional market rates. The Broadcast Center spent \$9.9 million, including duplication costs, or about 8-1/2 cents on the dollar. The cost per potential AFRTS audience member works out to 69 cents a month for the best television America has to offer.

Despite its success in obtaining programming, AFRTS receives occasional complaints about the type and quality of its offerings. Just as not all viewers back home like every network program or agree with all viewpoints expressed, not all members of the overseas military audience will like everything they see and hear.

#### **AVOIDING CENSORSHIP**

While seeking to upgrade the quality of its material, AFRTS continues to offer shows which viewers in the United States prefer. Only by having an audience tuned-in can AFRTS fulfill its aim of providing information messages. The Broadcast Center applies industry-wide criteria and "Standards and Practices" along with obvious good taste in choosing and scheduling programs. Even so, some in the AFRTS audience can occasionally find some of the programs "offensive." This is unavoidable if AFRTS is going to provide a true cross-section of popular programs. It also certifies AFRTS' tradition of credibility with the audience.

While carefully avoiding the role of censor, the Broadcast Center prints program advisories to stations as an aid in placing shows on local schedules. The BC flags violent and mature material to alert program directors about where they should schedule such shows.(3)

#### **DELIVERING THE ENORMOUS VOLUME OF PROGRAMMING**

In 1985, AFRTS provided programming to 88 land-based AM/FM radio stations and 35 land-based television outlets. It served more than 450 shipboard radio facilities, more than 500 shipboard television closed-circuit operations and more than 250 mini-television sites. In addition, the Broadcast Center operated a 24-hour radio and television service for news and special events via satellite and shortwave. For radio, Los Angeles weekly provided 80 hours of material on disks in the AM package and 14 hours in an alternative FM tape music package. The BC also sent out six hours of library music each week for disk jockeys to use on their local radio

shows. They distributed nearly 50 hours of holiday programming annually to help local outlets produce their own material. In cooperation with the Navy detachment, the Broadcast Center also sent out 84 radio hours each week on tape to support ships at sea.

During the same year, for television audiences, the Broadcast Center distributed approximately 80 hours of material on video cassettes each week to 17 circuits around the world. The package of non-time-sensitive material included weekly series, mini-series and made-for-television and theatrical movies. The cost of duplication made it necessary to "bicycle" the packages. After each station used it, the package, it would send it to the next. In areas where the audience included military families, the BC also provided a family-oriented package. They sent 12 hours of timely material on video cassette every week to each non-SATNET outlet. This special package included perishable entertainment programs, sporting events, and news and information specials normally only available to SATNET outlets.

#### **DELIVERING TO REMOTE-AREA TROOPS AND NAVY SHIPS**

For the 430 mini-TV outlets located at remote sites with small audiences, the BC provided up to 40 hours of entertainment programming. They also provided four additional hours of news and sports programming per week, directly to each mini-TV outlet. The outlets received their videotape machines and TV receivers directly from the military broadcasting services.

Until 1983, the Broadcast Center sent out more than 50 satellite "occasional use" live events each year to all major locations. They sent them to Italy, Germany and Spain, which were not yet in the 24-hour AFRTS satellite network (SATNET). The programs included such things as the Tournament of Roses Parade, the Super Bowl, World Series, and space shuttle launchings and landings. During 1983, as SATNET expanded 24-hour satellite support into Korea, Panama, Phillipines and other locations. The newly-renamed Broadcast Center ended the occasional-use satellite era.

AFRTS and the Navy Broadcasting Service (NBS) also began making additional use of the satellite network. NBS established land-based facilities to duplicate time-sensitive news and sports for distribution to ships. They located one on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and a second at Sigonella in Italy. From these facilities, they ferry the programs to the battle group aircraft carriers. From there, Navy helicopters fly the programs in cassette form to the smaller ships. This is a daily activity. After use, the ships return the tapes to the duplication facility for reuse.(1)

In 1983, the Navy Broadcasting Service began develop-

ing technology to put earth stations aboard large ships such as aircraft carriers and battleships. In a test aboard the *USS RANGER* in late 1983, the satellite tracking system worked well as the ship sailed from San Diego to Bremerton, Washington. The technology was successful as long as the ships were within range of the domestic satellite. However, the NBS continued to work on overcoming the problems of routine shipboard electronic interference in receiving an acceptable signal from international satellites.(2) Steel ships with sophisticated electronics and radar make lousy television environments.

AFRTS' mission of providing real time programming for SATNET and distribution of the entertainment package remained an enormous job. In 1985, the BC handled over a quarter-million video cassettes, 300,000 audio disks and 115,000 audio tapes — all shipped in more than 120,000 containers. These materials and the 24-hour daily satellite transmission enabled AFRTS to provide more than 36,000 hours of programming service during the year. The Broadcast Center had a staff of less than 150 employees to do all this work.

#### **DELIVERY BY SATELLITE (SATNET)**

Preparing entertainment packages and delivering them through normal mail channels is only part of the Broadcast Center's job. The arrival of SATNET has created the delivery of a 24-hour-a-day operation with news, information, sports and time sensitive entertainment. The satellite delivers this programming every day to worldwide audiences. SATNET had its official origins in a charter the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs issued in October, 1978. It instructed the American Forces Information Service to proceed with the planning of a worldwide AFRTS satellite network.

AFRTS developed a feasibility plan. Then it issued a contract to Future Systems of Gaithersburg, Maryland, to provide a technical review of the proposed system. In January, 1979, Future Systems delivered its findings. It concluded that the satellite network idea was technically sound. AFRTS contracted with the Electromagnetic Compatibility Analysis Center of Annapolis, Maryland, to study prospective earth station sites in the Pacific, European, Atlantic, and Southern Command areas.(4)

Just as armed forces broadcasting evolved from beginnings in Alaska in 1942, Phase 1 of the new satellite plan began at four sites in Alaska. They began on a test basis in December, 1978. The Alaskan Forces Satellite Network (AFSN) delivered programming from Elmendorf Air Force Base to the isolated facilities at Adak, Galena, King Salmon and Shemya. In January, 1979, AFSN went to a full-time operation. It telecast twelve hours a day and continued its broadcasting until April,

1982, when, the commercial Alaska State "BUSH" TV Satellite System became operational and took over the television service.

#### THE SOUTHERN COMMAND NETWORK

Panama is another location of pioneers in armed forces broadcasting. Phase I did not include it. But here, too, history repeated itself. The Southern Command Network (SCN) undertook construction of a satellite earth station at the end of 1978, thirty-eight years after the soldiers' first broadcast there. They expedited their modern-day efforts so that the facility would be in place quickly. They sought to avoid restrictions that might be imposed under terms of the new Panama Canal Zone Treaty, which was under negotiation. Meanwhile, during Phase II of the Satellite Network plan, the Broadcast Center leased a full-time dedicated uplink so that it could begin direct, full-time satellite transmission of its broadcasts. SCN completed the Panama earth station in April, 1979. The Southern Command Network (SCN) began full-time satellite service in August of that year using a domestic satellite transponder to deliver the AFSN signal. AFRTS in Los Angeles began to deliver their service in early 1982. This service provided programming for American Forces at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, using the same commercial satellite that was servicing Panama.

Phase III of the plan concerned itself with the establishment of the international portion of the satellite network. In December, 1982, the Atlantic satellite came into service. Its signal reached from Iceland to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Diego Garcia came on-line at once. Keflavik in Iceland began receiving programming in April, 1983; Lajes Field in the Azores in November, 1983; AFN in February, 1984, and Italy in July, 1985. Bermuda began service from the domestic satellite in February, 1985.

In the Pacific, AFRTS tested its transponder and began service in the fall of 1983. Korea joined SATNET in October. FEN at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines came on-line in January, 1984. Service began on a test basis in Okinawa and in Japan in the fall of 1985.

During 1985, negotiations continued with the governments of Spain and Turkey to allow satellite service. In Turkey, AFRTS developed plans to create a full network reaching all the United States military bases, however small their contingents. By the middle of 1986, most land-based, full-service networks and outlets were able to receive SATNET full-time.

As the SATNET system expanded, more and more stations went on line, and AFRTS decided to move from "occasional use" to transmitting material on a 24-hour-a-day basis with its real time capabilities. The Broadcast

Center had to resolve whether it should use SATNET to distribute the package in order to save costs of duplicating and mail service.

Such a method of operation would have also insured that each AFRTS facility would be broadcasting the same shows at approximately the same time. However, analysis showed that using the satellite in such a way would not be cost-effective. It would have to provide additional recording equipment and extra staff at each facility. This would have also meant less time available on the satellite for transmission of news and other time-sensitive material. Finally, sending out the copyrighted entertainment package by satellite would have opened the possibility of having the material pirated. That was a major concern of producers who provide the shows to AFRTS. Also programs would still need to be duplicated on tape for ships and mini-TV sites.

Ultimately, AFRTS decided to use SATNET primarily to deliver news, sports and other time-sensitive programming. SATNET also gave the Broadcast Center the ability to pass entire Secretary of Defense and Presidential news conferences overseas live or with minimum delay. As a rule, the commercial networks excerpt only a few ideas or statements from SECDEF conferences and they may not be the information of greatest interest to military audiences. By transmitting entire press conferences on a "short-fuse," tape-delay" basis, AFRTS gave overseas outlets the chance to view the complete press conference. Outlet news departments could then have the opportunity to excerpt portions of the questions and answers that might be of special interest to the military viewers.(5)

Despite the great advantages which SATNET offers to the Broadcast Center, its 24-hour-a-day operation has presented significant scheduling problems. Through the end of 1985, the BC was able to feed only 17-hours a day of decommercialized programming and DoD internal information spots. During the remaining seven hours, the BC provided a "dirty" (straight) feed taken directly from the CNN. This portion of the transmission schedule is a totally hands-off operation. There is no attempt to assist the field by removing commercials and inserting spots. According to Colonel Cole, the inability to provide decommercialized service 24-hours-a-day remained his "greatest disappointment" in developing the SATNET schedule.

A work-force study of the satellite operation concluded that it would take sixteen staff members in the Broadcast Center to expand decommercialized SATNET service to 24-hours-a-day. The increase in manpower would use the additional seven hours to provide more specialized service and programs from a variety of sources. These included specific sports events and news conferences. It would allow Broadcast Center to adjust its

programming more to the various overseas time zones. To Colonel Cole, this increase in service would be a vast improvement over the 1985 network. To simply feed seven straight hours of CNN daily, seems quite repetitive. Moreover, the change would save the overseas outlets from having to "decommercialize" the seven hours of material.

Whatever its immediate shortcomings, the improved service which SATNET provides helps AFRTS work toward its goal of holding audience interest. This comes at a time when the local outlets are no longer the only source of after-hour entertainment. Colonel Cole believes that, "If we lose the audience we'll be unable to accomplish our information mission."

Despite such problems, the Broadcast Center has continued the mission and traditions begun with AFRS during World War II, fifty years ago. Today, delivery of armed forces broadcasting is an enormous job. As might be expected, the arrival of television, and more recently of SATNET, created a proportional shortage of working space. BC facilities, in the heart of Hollywood on McCadden Place, were already overcrowded.

So, in 1984, after years of searching for a suitable replacement, the Broadcast Center began to move into new facilities in the Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. They completed the move in November 1986. In the new

spaces, the staff could more easily serve the needs of their audience.

By the late 1980s, AFRTS became a symbol of the decade's achievements in new and high technology. The Army, Navy and Air Force all refined their broadcasting operations.

All that would be needed as the American military continued to serve in its role as peacekeeper in the international community. That was particularly true in the Middle East and in Central America.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 23

- (1) Interview with Roger Maynard, December 9, 1985.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Interview with Colonel David Cole, July 26, 1985; Briefing Paper which Colonel Cole presented to the United States Air Forces Europe, (USAFE) Commanders Conference at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, June 13, 1984, on the operation of AFRTS-BC.
- (4) Ibid; Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence Pollack, October 25, 1983.
- (5) Ibid; Cole interview.
- (6) Interview with Colonel Cole and June 13, 1984, briefing presentation on operation of AFRTS-BC.

## CHAPTER 24

# THE MILITARY BROADCASTING SERVICES

Whatever it's problems, the Broadcast Center has continued to produce outstanding programming to fill broadcast schedules of AFRTS outlets around the world. While during World War II, the BC both set the policy and provided the packages, today the Broadcast Center has little input into field operations. Since the late 1940s, various agencies in the Department of Defense and in the individual Services have handled policy matters, funding and field procedures.

Until the mid-1970s, Pentagon officials generally established regulations and defined areas of responsibility for each Service. In 1962, Congress started pressing for a consolidation of operations. The Army, for example, managed AFN and the Blue Danube Network during its existence. Later, it ran the Italian operation, Panama, AFKN and AFVN. The Air Force ran Alaska, FEN, independent stations on air bases and, initially, all the television operations. The Navy took over Rota, Spain, from the Air Force and managed the Caribbean basin, various stations in Iceland and Australia and of course, the facilities aboard ships. The public affairs offices of each Service provided the personnel to man stations in their spheres of interest. The local commands provided the funds.

### NAVY BROADCASTING SERVICE

Problems could easily arise in such a divided chain of command. Still, it wasn't until the mid-1970s that efforts began toward a more efficient operation between the Services and the field. On July 1, 1976, the Secretary of the Navy established the Navy Broadcasting Service. It's mission statement set forth a new format, which was later to become the model for the other Armed Services.

The NBS assumed responsibility for operating and maintaining all AFRTS outlets under Navy jurisdiction. It established new outlets "as necessary to provide Navy internal audiences in remote and isolated locations with entertainment programming via radio and television broadcast." It established policy and served as the primary liaison with the Department of Defense, other government agencies and the civilian broadcast industry

for Navy AFRTS matters. The Service also negotiated support agreements for the joint-Service manning of AFRTS outlets. It represented the Navy during negotiations for overseas broadcast rights and frequency assignments. And, it sponsored the acquisition of shipboard systems and supported the Fleet Commanders in their administration.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Navy gradually decided that radio and television should assume a more prominent role. Until 1966, a section of the Navy's Morale and Welfare Branch of the Bureau of Naval Personnel handled broadcast matters. However, Navy's Chief of Information had the responsibility for directing the Service's AFRTS operations. To handle broadcast, the Navy assigned an officer to CHINFO's Internal Information Branch.

During 1970 and 1971, CHINFO conducted Navy-wide studies regarding the use of broadcast media. The survey concluded that the service was ineffective and far behind the other Armed Services in the use of the media.

### JORDAN RIZER

In 1971, the Navy hired broadcast pioneer Jordan E. Rizer, a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, to run the Navy's AFRTS. His Air Force experience had included tours of duty at AFN and with the 7122nd Broadcast Squadron. In his last assignment, Rizer headed the Service's AFRTS activities. While in this position, he helped design the mobile television vans that the Air Force sent to Thailand (see Chapter 21).<sup>(1)</sup>

While supporting the Navy's AFRTS land-based operations, Rizer's primary mission from 1972 to 1977 was to place closed-circuit television systems on board all surface ships with crews of 350 or more. The program excluded aircraft carriers since they already had information and entertainment television systems onboard. During these five years, the Navy manufactured, assembled and installed some 140 of these austere television systems. As they completed each one, the ship became an affiliate of AFRTS. When it deployed, it began receiving approximately sixty hours of broadcast material a week via one of the Navy's programming circuits. The "SITE" (Shipboard Information, Training and Entertainment) system could provide programs from one of four different sources: a live camera, 16mm film, 35mm slides, or 1" videotape.<sup>(2)</sup>

As installation of the SITE Systems progressed, Rizer's staff turned to the development of a smaller prototype SITE System suitable for ships with a complement of less than 350. The Navy placed the first Mini-SITE aboard the *USS MILLER* for testing in December, 1974.

The Navy installed the first four working models of the Mini-SITE System in February, 1979, onboard fast frigates

home-ported in Yokosuka, Japan. Installation of production model Mini-SITE Systems finally began in October of that year. Meanwhile, the Navy developed and installed a smaller version of Mini-SITE System, called Sub-SITE, aboard the nuclear submarine *USS LEWIS AND CLARK* for testing in May, 1976. Production models began to be installed in February, 1980.

In 1979, the NBS began to replace the original SITE 1 Systems with SITE 2 Systems, which contained the same state-of-the-art equipment as the smaller versions. The newer version used the recently marketed one-half-inch Sony Beta VCR videotape recorder that the Navy had subjected to a long shipboard testing.

Meanwhile, Jordan Rizer took steps to protect the Navy's AFRTS assets at overseas shore locations from budgetary and manpower cuts. In 1972, he transferred all assets from local and fleet commanders to his office -- the Chief of Navy Broadcasting. For most of his tour, the Navy assigned Rizer to the Navy Internal Relations Activity (NIRA) which it established his office as a CNO field activity to "more adequately fulfill the Navy's internal information mission."

When the Navy Broadcasting Service began in 1976, Rizer became its Director. His office assumed the administrative services, which the NIRA had previously rendered for Navy Broadcasting. In this new organization, the Navy Broadcasting Service had complete control over personnel, funding and equipment. It could operate, at least in theory, without interference from local and theater commanders.(3)

The Navy Broadcasting Service became the model for Congress and the other Armed Services of how their AFRTS operations should be handled. As a result, Congress directed the Army and Air Force to centralize management control of their AFRTS assets. It sought to avoid unnecessary duplication of management functions and operate more efficiently.

DoD has probably studied AFRTS as much as any other program, with an average of one major study a year for each of the last three decades. These studies concentrated on various program areas or geographic regions. They employed a variety of personnel from within and outside of government. They reached varying, even conflicting conclusions. Despite this disparity, the studies all had one common thread. Each found that the AFRTS management as a whole needed organizational streamlining and a more cohesive and coordinated structure. Nevertheless, little agreement could be reached among the DoD components about what corrective steps should be taken.

During these years, Congress maintained an active interest in AFRTS and its management problems. During the late 1970s, both the Senate and the House of Represen-

tatives became increasingly disturbed with what several members considered "the Pentagon's failure to take decisive corrective action."

In its report on the FY 1980 Defense Department budget, Congress again voiced this criticism in no uncertain terms. Again, it recommended a consolidation of all AFRTS operations.

At the same time, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD(PA)) expressed his concern about the management of AFRTS, which functionally belonged to him. He directed the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Administration to undertake a joint study and make specific reorganization proposals. The study, completed in late 1979, conveyed to the Deputy Secretary of Defense with comments from the Military Departments. The Secretary showed extensive personal interest in the issues and alternatives raised in the study. He discussed them with Secretary of the Army Alexander, Secretary of the Navy Hidalgo and Secretary of the Air Force Mark.

On March 4, 1980, the Deputy Secretary issued a decision memorandum. It directed the reorganization of AFRTS to achieve two mutually supportive goals. First, the new organization would provide strengthened policy development, resource management and program oversight functions by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. Second, it would streamline operational control of AFRTS activities within each of the Military Departments.

The reorganization had several essential features. The Deputy Secretary directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments to continue to operate designated AFRTS outlets. He also directed that they consolidate management and operating control in a single staff. They were to ensure that these new staffs received sufficient personnel and resources to do their jobs effectively. The Deputy Secretary directed the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs to continue to develop and issue AFRTS policy. The ASD(PA) delegated the task to the American Forces Information Service (AFIS), where it remains today (Directed by Jordan Rizer). AFIS also would provide core broadcast programming for AFRTS stations and program management, department-wide, for all its activities.

The last function introduced a new dimension in AFRTS management. As Program Manager, the ASD(PA), acting through the Director, AFIS, now exercised several new responsibilities. He approved, disapproved or directed the establishment of new stations. He directed the closing of existing stations and the configuration of broadcast networks. He had input in the selection of network commanders. He developed an equipment standardization program and certified equipment for use in the AFRTS system. He also developed training criteria and objectives for personnel. Finally, he had control of

overall AFRTS fiscal and manpower resources.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense established three milestones. First, he directed the immediate development of a Charter for AFRTS. Second, the Secretaries of the Military Departments were to develop plans for control of AFRTS activities in their respective Departments. Finally, AFIS and the Military Departments were to carry out the AFRTS changes.

The AFIS charter developed with the publication of DoD Directive 5122.10, dated March 19, 1980. The Directive defined the mission, functions, authorities and relationships of AFIS in both print and broadcast. It established an Armed Forces Information Council (AFIC) to serve as a Joint-Service Policy Committee reporting to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. This Committee included a chairperson representing the ASD(PA), one representative from each of the Military Departments, a representative from AFIS and an Executive Secretary.

The AFIC has two functions. First, it considers questions of policy and advises the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs on matters of internal information and ideas among the membership. While the Committee's not a new idea, it does formalize a coordinating mechanism, which can improve communication and cooperation within the AFIS and AFRTS family.(4)

#### ARMY BROADCASTING SERVICE

To effect the reorganization directive, the Army established the Army Broadcasting Service (ABS) on March 4, 1980. It assumed the responsibility for management of AFN, the Southern European Broadcasting Service (Italy), SCN Panama, AFKN Korea and the Marshall Islands. The ABS also assumed control of Mini-TV-Sites in Central Europe and Italy.

The ABS became a field operating agency of the Army's Public Affairs Office, commanded by a bird Colonel who reported directly to the Deputy Chief of Public Affairs. The Army Broadcasting Service officially began operations October 1, 1980, with Colonel Felix Casipit as its first Director.

Casipit expanded operations and upgraded equipment and service at all facilities under his command. ABS brought Mini-TV to American Forces in Bonn, West Germany and TV service to SHAPE in Belgium. It established new microwave links within Korea and upgraded antiquated transmission equipment in both Korea and Europe. It assumed responsibility of the Navy's AFRTS functions in Italy and brought Mini-TV service to DoD personnel serving with the Multi-National Peacekeeping Force in the Sinai. In a joint action, the Southern European Broadcasting Service at Sigonella videotaped the AFRTS news and information programs

and shipped them to U.S. personnel serving in the Sinai.

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of its early years was ABS' success in turning the Southern European Broadcasting (SEB) Service into a functioning network. Although radio outlets in Italy had unofficially radiated their signals for many years, TV programs could only transmit over cable on military bases or in rec centers. Large numbers of DoD personnel living off-base couldn't receive AFRTS television programming. After several years of negotiations with the Italian government, the United States reached an agreement in 1983 that authorized AFRTS to broadcast over the air to DoD personnel. The on-air television service began in early 1985. It provided programming to U.S. bases and surrounding housing areas in Aviano, Vicenza, Livorno, Naples, Gaeta, San Vito, Sigonella, LaMaddalena and the Air Force facility at Comiso. The U. S. also obtained an agreement in 1983 to install five AFRTS satellite earth stations in Italy to enable SEB to receive SATNET transmissions.(5)

#### AIR FORCE BROADCASTING SERVICE

Following DoD directives and the example of the Navy, the Air Force created its Broadcasting Service on October 1, 1980. Unlike the Army and the Navy, which are located in Washington close to the chain of command, the Air Force established its Broadcasting Service (AFBS) at Kelly AFB, Texas. It manages AFRTS activities in Turkey, Greece, Spain, the Middle East, the Azores, Alaska, Japan and some isolated locations in Western Europe. AFBS took responsibility for mini-TV in Europe, Middle East, Africa, and the Far East.

While its mission is the same as its sister services, there is one basic difference. In the Air Force, there are three squadrons between the AFBS and their stations.

The Army and Navy Broadcasting Services created a chain of command that went directly from the director of the service to the station or network commander in the field. While their goal was to remove the local commands from interference with the AFRTS outlets, the achievement of this didn't happen overnight. The Army Broadcasting Service didn't officially take complete control of all its networks until October 1, 1982. Only then did personnel serving at Army AFRTS stations cease to be part of the local commands and become part of the Office of the Secretary of the Army.(6)

Until that date in '82 - more than 39 years after it began broadcasting in London during World War II - American Forces Network had remained virtually autonomous from AFRTS' control. While nominally under the control of the United States European Command (except for funding), AFN managed to function as an independent organization. It received little interference or even

supervision from military authorities until the ABS finally absorbed the network into its organizational structure. AFN remained a radio-only operation into the 1970s because its longtime civilian management feared the new and unknown medium of television.

Once Secretary of the Army Robert Froehlke started the process of bringing television to AFN in 1971, the Army energized Project J7 (Scope Picture). It quickly began providing television to U.S. Forces in Germany. The effort required the contribution of several disparate military groups including USAREUR, U.S. Army Communications Command, 5th Signal Command, U.S. Army Television-Audio Support Activity and, of course, AFN.

The Commander-in-Chief, USAREUR, General Michael Davison, still exercised authority over AFN. He gave first priority for providing television to the troops in more isolated forward areas. Next on the list were non-headquarters units away from major population areas. Headquarters in large cities got lowest priority. The Air Force controlled the first two phases of the operations because it remained the numerically dominant recipient of the service. The Army then assumed responsibility for the third phase of the completed network when it became the major receiving service.

This transfer of control occurred in July, 1973, as AFN was celebrating its thirtieth birthday, when the Air Force finished Phase II of the Scope Pictures expansion. It had completed 46 television transmitters and 64 microwave links, providing black-and-white service to forty-one percent of the American Forces in Germany.

Engineering for the Army Phase III installations faced a "normal" AFRTS overseas problem. It had to limit its signal as much as possible to DoD audiences to avoid interfering with possible sales of U.S. programs to German TV networks.

In August, 1973, USAREUR directed that all AFN television facilities become color-capable. Phase III installations presented no problems since their design would accept a color signal. However, the equipment already in place had to be upgraded during the next three years to meet the new directive.

Meanwhile, the Air Force operation continued to originate from those rather primitive studios at Ramstein Air Force Base near Kaiserslautern. The system transmitted in black and white only in the European PAL format. That caused a whole lot of problems. Nearly thirty-five percent of the programming furnished by AFRTS-LA couldn't be aired because of conflicts with the broadcast rights of the Germans. Americans who brought their television set with them from the U.S. couldn't receive the television picture without modifying them to the European system. Even if DoD personnel bought PAL format sets in Europe, they'd soon become obsolete as soon as

AFN went on line using the American NTSC system!

Despite the problems, AFN completed Phase III in October, 1976. It spent more than a year building a color television complex in Frankfurt. No one who built those old studios after WWII ever gave thought to the possibility that AFN might one day include TV. At Midnight on October 27, 1976 the last reel of black and white film ran through its antiquated projector at Ramstein. Fifth Signal Command crews then began the job of reversing the microwave paths so the network could feed from Frankfurt instead of to it. At noon the next day, AFN Commander Lieutenant Colonel Floyd McBride and USAREUR Chief of Staff Major General Dean Tice uncapped a television camera. AFN television went on the air, in color.

Because the color signal was in the American NTSC standard, it pioneered the dropping of all restrictions on program usage and the broadcasting of the entire AFRTS entertainment package. The assumption of its television mission spurred a period of unparalleled activity for AFN. By the mid-1980s, it had created a network that offers professional-level quality of service both on radio and television.

## PROFESSIONAL STAFFS THE KEY INGREDIENT

Technological achievements, the state of the art equipment and the best programs count for little by themselves. In the end, the success of AFN and of all the AFRTS networks and independent stations, depends on the caliber of the broadcast staffs. It emanates from their ability to put the program on the air with the highest quality of service.

For most of its existence, AFN, as well as the other AFRTS networks and outlets, had few problems staffing their facilities. As their reputation grew after World War II, soldiers with professional broadcasting experience who went overseas, were usually able to transfer into AFRTS. In 1973, however, when the draft ended, AFRTS, for the first time, faced the same staffing problems that other military organizations had to solve over the years. That is, to find competent professionals to operate the equipment and man the microphones.

## THE DEFENSE INFORMATION (BROADCASTING) SCHOOL

Their answer was the Defense Information School (DINFOS) of Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. Originally located at Fort Slocum, the broadcasting school had become part of DINFOS in 1973. It provided military broadcasters with the basic tools needed for entry-level positions at AFRTS outlets. There, they would then gain additional experience from on-the-job training. The

school teaches a range of broadcast subjects from the basic essentials of radio and television studio operations to the methods of electronic journalism. The courses emphasize proper voice and diction techniques and how to select news items, sports, feature materials and music. Broadcast managers receive advanced instruction with a variety of courses on unit administration, management and technical training.

These are the broadcasters who enable AFRTS to continue the early traditions pioneered in Panama, Alaska, Casablanca, and London during World War II. These same professionals are those who have continued the traditions in both peacetime and in combat in Korea and Viet Nam.

AFRTS staffers across the years agree. The challenge of their work and the sometimes difficult settings in which they had to do it, provided them with enjoyable military careers. That's true, whether those careers were short or long term.

Even after the F-4 Phantom jet crashed into his station at Udorn, Gary Sumrall observed, "We're all support people.

"We're behind the lines and behind our troops."

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 24

- (1) Command History of the Navy Broadcasting Service, March 14, 1980; Interviews with Jordan Rizer, October 1983.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid; Interview with Admiral David Cooney, January 10, 1984.
- (4) AFRTS briefing to the Annual AFRTS Workshop, April 18, 1980.
- (5) Army Broadcasting Service History, March 1980 – October 1983, n.d.; Interview with Colonel Felix Casipit, January 12, 1984.
- (6) Army Broadcasting Service History.

## NEW CONTINGENCY MISSIONS

By October, 1982, it became apparent that a United States presence would be required in Lebanon for longer than expected. The Marines requested that the Navy Broadcasting Service send in one of its Mini-SITE systems. Rizer's office agreed. It also offered to provide its prototype mobile station that it had put together at the request of AFIS to support the Rapid Deployment Forces. After a brief discussion, the Marine Command in Beirut made a formal request to bring the stations overseas.

John Burlage, who served as Rizer's second Command Master Chief at the Navy Broadcasting Service, helped staff the mobile detachments sent to Beirut. He served as station manager himself. He described that station as both evolutionary and revolutionary in its use of state-of-the-art equipment. Lieutenant Robert Nash also had helped put the first station together and then commanded the first wave to go in to Lebanon. He recalled that the AFRS mobile vans that operated during World War II and Korea were pretty cumbersome. It took a long time to get them installed and on the air. In contrast, Jordan Rizer's Navy mobile broadcast studio could fit into a C-130 aircraft, fit onto a forklift and be on the air in a couple of hours.

With the Marines' request in hand, Lt. Nash and his five-man NBS detachment moved the station by truck from Arlington to Norfolk. From there, it flew by C-141 to Italy and then by C-130 to Beirut. Once there, the unit put the station on a fork lift. Then they drove it to the Marine headquarters compound, a couple of hundred yards up the hill from the international airport. The Lebanese government had given permission for the station to go on the air. The only problem was getting the AFRTS shortwave signal into Beirut to provide the news and sports. Until they could make arrangements to bring in the AFRTS radio feed via satellite, land lines, or undersea cable, the staff did the next best thing. It went into town and obtained newscopy from the local AP office.

The radio station went on the air ten hours after the detachment arrived on December 15th. It began a regular broadcast schedule from 6:00 AM until Midnight with the AFRTS package, news and sports. On the television side, the Mini-SITE system initially amounted to some playback machines and monitors that AFRTS moved to the

Marine units. As a result, Nash's unit studied the feasibility of transmitting television signals to the men from a central location. It took until the beginning of May to obtain permission from the government to radiate and bring in the low-powered transmitters. Broadcasts could only reach within the Marine Perimeter. They carried the AFRTS entertainment package, live locally-produced television news and occasional interviews with visiting officials.

During the first detachment's tour in Lebanon, which lasted just over four months, the Marines' main enemy was the dreariness of their duties, the climate and the dirt. Instead of their traditional deployment as a reacting force that went in, did its job and left, the Marines found themselves in primarily a passive role. In such a circumstance, AFRTS' radio and television went a long way to relieving the boredom and frustrations.(1)

The uncertainty didn't change much until the fourth wave went into Lebanon on July 5, 1983. Burlage recalled that when he went to Lebanon, he didn't expect to find himself in a dangerous assignment.

"Admittedly, no. When we went over there, while it was no game, it was more of a chance to get over there and do good things for the troops and maybe live under some rigorous conditions. Under no stretch of the imagination did we think we'd become the enemy!"

From that time until November, when the fifth and last wave of broadcasters left following the infamous truck bomb attack on the Marine compound, the war status deteriorated. The news, entertainment, and most important, command information, became crucial.

### AFRTS STAFFERS SERVE IN LEBANON

Burlage summarized the value of the stations in recounting one brief moment following a mortar attack that wounded some men with shrapnel. Although at least one round hit within fifty yards of the station, radio and TV stayed on the air. Taking a break, Burlage watched as some walking wounded passed the station compound on their way to be evacuated to the hospital ship. The men were "beat to hell, in very rough shape. They were being led by a few friends. As they walked by, I'll never forget it, we stood up and looked at them. They stopped and came up to our fence. One of them said, 'I just want to thank you guys for what you've been doing for us. You've done us a great favor. You were here when we needed you.' This was from guys who'd been wounded! These were all big, tough Marines who'd been through mortar fire and all the rest. It was a few minutes before any of us could talk!"(2)

The fifth wave, which arrived in Lebanon on September 8, 1983, contributed even more valuable services as

the conflict continued to deteriorate. Joe Ciokin, who served as the station manager, recalled that when they volunteered, he and his men were aware that Beirut was a "big-risk area." Nevertheless, he considered the struggle there as one in which the "the factions were fighting among themselves and it was not really the Americans who were the target. We were just there as a peacekeeping force and that was the uppermost thought in our mind - peacekeeping." By the time his unit assembled in Washington D.C. for its predeparture briefing that September, the Marines had come under increased attack. Ciokin acknowledged that the escalating combat "caused us some real concern. In fact, about four days before we arrived, the Lebanese began the most intense hostile fire of the period and it was to continue throughout our tenure."<sup>(3)</sup>

As with the previous broadcast detachments, the fifth wave took over operation of the station in less than a day's time. Once in place, Ciokin and his men established their own personality for the station while maintaining a typical AFRTS operation on both radio and television. Using the minicam equipment, Ciokin's men tried "to put as many Marine faces on the tube as we could, just as a morale-type thing. We ran the tapes after the network evening news. Without any production facilities, however, we couldn't do any fancy stuff. We could do a kind of cut-and-paste type thing with the shooting, but essentially we just put it straight on, practically from the camera." In addition, the station taped for later broadcast, press conferences and visits from such VIPs as Vice President George Bush and Marine Commandant General P.X. Kelley.<sup>(4)</sup>

While the unit developed as normal a routine as possible, Ciokin worked on plans to move the station to more secure quarters. He'd never been happy with the location of the facilities, a feeling that his whole unit shared. "The men's sleeping quarters were an open-air tent. We were out in the tree line and in between the BLT (Battalion Landing Team) and the other buildings. We were wide open to the highway. Anybody driving by could've shot a B-40 rocket or something else at us point blank. We felt very, very exposed being out there like that. We had sandbags, but that's about all the protection we had!"

"We needed a more secure installation especially, as we were looking at it then, if we were in there for the long haul. Then, definitely we wanted to get a more secure site. And, of course, the engineers, being technical types, were always looking for better environments for their equipment. That added even more pressure to the need for a permanent facility."<sup>(5)</sup>

The Marines settled on the Lebanese Civil Aviation Building as a practicable site. After negotiations, they

reached an agreement to obtain sufficient space for the station and quarters for the staff. On October 22, with assistance from the Marines, Ciokin and his men moved the van next to the building. They created a television studio inside with sleeping accommodations across the hall.

#### AFRTS' STAFFERS ESCAPE CERTAIN DEATH

At 6:00 AM, the morning radio man, Bob Rucker, signed on the air, cutting away from the AFRTS network feed that ran when the station was not broadcasting "live." After introducing the canned program, Rucker went to shave. If the station had not moved the day before, he'd have used a washbasin in one of the tents. Instead he chose to use the facilities inside the building. That's where he was when the suicide bomber drove his truck into the Marine compound and exploded it inside the barracks, killing two hundred and forty-one marines and sailors!<sup>(6)</sup>

Rucker was briefly trapped when the ceiling came down on him, jamming the door shut. Ciokin was blown across the room because he was on the side closest to the explosion. He and his roommate scrambled up and then "hid under a table just like kids, thinking that we'd been hit by artillery." Because of the earlier bombing of the U.S. Embassy and alerts the station had been receiving every night, they soon realized what had happened.<sup>(7)</sup>

The blast knocked the radio station off the air and extensively damaged the television equipment. However, Ciokin's immediate reaction focused on the need to help in the rescue operations, not the station.

"None of us gave it a second thought."

The move to the more secure location had saved all the broadcasters' lives, although most suffered minor injuries. Ciokin's men immediately joined the efforts to pull survivors out of the destroyed building. Once the immediate shock of the explosion passed, Ciokin realized that enough rescuers had arrived. He collected his men and set about to put the station back on the air.<sup>(8)</sup>

The staff needed a week to obtain necessary parts from abroad to put TV back in operation. They were able to get radio back on the air in five hours and began broadcasting command information, providing a morale boost with music and commentary. The programming had an immediate impact.

"When the Marines were able to get out of the perimeter, which was almost the next day, the first thing they told us was what it meant to them to hear radio come back on the air. We were their beacon of hope. It told them that we were surviving, that we were still alive!"<sup>(9)</sup>

Despite the tragedy, the station broadcast its regular entertainment programming as soon as it returned to the

air. In the immediate post-explosion period, the station's primary aim was to update the story as events took place so that the Marines would know what was happening.

The station was fulfilling its mission under trying circumstances in the best tradition of AFRTS. Yet, Ciokin soon discovered the programming was not having the expected effect on morale. The fifth or sixth day after the explosion, he ran into a Marine Sergeant Major who told him, "You know, we've gotta do something. Everybody's walking around depressed. Everybody's down. We've gotta do something to bring them back, to build up their morale again and get them over this hump and revive their spirits, so to speak." (10)

The station manager looked at the local programming his staff was producing and suddenly realized that most of the material they broadcast reflected his own men's depression! "Everybody in the compound was walking around like a bunch of zombies, our heads down, dragging our feet. The radio station was doing the same thing. All the stuff we were playing was heavy metal, bang, crash, all that kind of stuff. It just was dark, depressive music."

Ciokin discussed the low spirits with his staff and worked with them to make the programming more upbeat. "We played games with the Marines. There was a Marine they called 'the Ugliest Marine in Lebanon.' We played a joke on him. We also started getting into birthdays and into plans for going home with an emphasis on how the Marines would overcome the problems." (11)

The new programming had an immediate impact. The compound "began to turn around. The Marines started coming back at us the same way, joking at us, razzing us when they saw us." To Ciokin, the post-explosion efforts illustrated how any good broadcast operation had to "be aware of the audience, respond to the audience's needs, because you were going to create within the audience certain responses." In his estimation, the station in Beirut had accomplished the most "crucial" AFRTS job since Vietnam, "obviously the most important. The mission was the precise one for which AFRTS was created - morale, information and news." (12)

#### ANOTHER UNIQUE TEST

Lebanon and Honduras provided unique tests for AFRTS. Its success in carrying out the mission validates the effectiveness of the organization in preparing its personnel for their jobs. Lebanon showed forth the true commitment that armed forces broadcasters have for their work and the audiences they serve. Yet, it may be that the more "normal" station operation, in the end, confirms the importance of the job which AFRTS has now accomplished for more than fifty years.

On April 1, 1985, General Robert Herres sent a telex to AFIS from his command in Greenland regarding the testing of SATNET service to Thule and Sondrestrom. In his message, the General advised: "I strongly request immediate, permanent authority for transmission of live AFRTS-TV SATNET Programming to Sondrestrom AB and Thule AB, Greenland. Since signal testing began in January, with live news and sports programming, there has been a noticeable morale boost.

"Discontinuing the service would significantly degrade the Air Force's vital internal information mission. It would severely impact on troop morale and welfare. The SATNET programming is essential for improving quality of life and working conditions for our people at two of the most remote, severe weather sites in the world. The SATNET feed is their primary real-time contact with what is happening in the outside world. Every effort should be made with FCC and other federal and commercial agencies to insure continued AFRTS SATNET service for Greenland."

Every AFRTS outlet has its unique set of problems and fulfills the particular needs of the location and personnel it serves. If the outlets maintain a commercial-like operation with traditions developed over many years, other stations such as in Beruit will come and go as our forces deploy and then withdraw.

Following Ciokin's detachment, wave six arrived. It quickly scaled down because of the concern for security and the decision by the Marine Corps commander to eliminate as many noncombatants as possible. The vans and television equipment left Beruit along with the Marine peacekeeping force.

#### AFRTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

In Central America, AFRTS has continued to provide service from Panama to Honduras. At the request of the Southern Command, on October 3, 1983, Senior Chief Bobbie Carleton and Master Chief David Rook helped put together three mobile stations and fly them into Honduras. By that time, AFRTS radio and television had almost become an accepted component in remote contingency operations.

After accumulating the hardware and the support equipment in Sacramento, Master Chief Rook led the three teams into Honduras. There, Carleton set up two of the three stations. She and Petty Officer First Class Ed Fischer operated one of the radio and television outlets for two months until the Army left that part of Honduras. Each of the three stations serviced the three major concentrations of U.S. Forces conducting training and exercises in the Central American country.

With agreements already negotiated with the government, Carleton faced only one problem in putting the

station on the air in Puerta Castillo. She would have to coordinate with the Army staff officers in selecting an acceptable site. Carleton and her counterparts at the other two locations had to deal with two chains of commands. One was the Navy Broadcasting Service back in Arlington, Virginia, and the other was with the local host commander.(13)

The operation of the Broadcasting Services presumed to eliminate problems with the commanders in the field. In practice, that didn't happen.

"It's a very difficult thing for a strange cat-and-dog outfit like broadcasting to go into an operational environment where you're dealing with tank commanders and pilots and combat warriors. Try to explain to them what you're all about and have them understand. These are the rifle-carrying warriors. They see you as somebody else to carry a rifle. They see you as somebody else to go in there and augment their ground forces. These commanders sometimes have a tendency to meddle inappropriately. Some of it really isn't meddling. Some of it is very appropriate. Sometimes our own people, our broadcast people, can't deal with a commander, nor recognize the difference between meddling and appropriate involvement."(14)

In the end, as with Carleton in Honduras, the primary AFRTS mission continues to serve the local commander with command information directly over radio and TV. Since the commander in the field remains the "operational" boss of the station in his area, managers have had to devise ways to interface with the command. In Carleton's case, it required working out decisions on the entertainment material and the length of the broadcast day. It meant developing with the commander "a continuing kind of trust in me. The success of any of the mobile detachments depends very heavily on such interpersonal relations."(15)

These vignettes notwithstanding, it is dangerous to compare the requirements of soldiers stationed in places like Germany, Italy or Japan with situations in Beirut, or in a remote radar site in Turkey, in the Sinai desert or in Honduras. Yet, there is a common thread. Those mobile stations that Carleton helped to put in operation clearly provided crucial links to home. They insured the dissemination of news and information and maintenance of morale among their audiences. As Carleton noted, in a place like Honduras, the "audience is absolutely captive. When the BLT was blown up in Beirut, the entire encampment was staying around the station all the time. We were their only link to find out what was going on."

The operation in Honduras was the first time that AFRTS followed the deployment of operational forces so closely with stations. According to Carleton, the deployment "was an almost with 'em situation...very much

worth the effort." The broadcasters, almost from the first day, became "part of the outfit. Those men would have bent over backwards for us. They wanted us there." Once, when she had to shut down the radio transmissions for a short time to install a TV antenna, she found the whole camp outside the van. They all wanted to help her get the job done so that the station could go back on the air as soon as possible.(16)

Today these vans are gone but the station at Palmerola/Sato Cano Air Base provides television and FM radio services as part of the Southern Command Network.

In Panama AFRTS would cover the first shooting war since Vietnam. The months leading to the U.S. military action in Panama, dubbed Operation Just Cause, were filled with great uncertainty and anxiety for not only the people of Panama, but for the leadership and crew of the Southern Command Network (SCN).

The balloon went up for SCN on December 16th 1989 with the shooting death of Navy Lieutenant Paz. However, due to the increasing tensions between the Panama Defense Forces (PDF) and the U.S. military, a drawdown of U.S. Forces and families and a shortening of military tours from 36 to either 24 or 12 months had begun during June 1989. As a result, by December 16th, SCN had lost about one third of its staff and many of those remaining had less than 60 days on board. Additionally, both the Program Director and the News Director were on emergency leave in the U.S. during the initial period of Just Cause. The success or failure of SCN's operations depended on the Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Bob Gaylord, and a relatively young, inexperienced staff.

Many preparations, however, had already been accomplished prior to this date to include the prepositioning of backup equipment in case the fixed facilities at Fort Clayton were damaged or destroyed. LTC Gaylord called together all section supervisors on December 19th to increase the network's operational readiness. The SCN mobile van was deployed to Quarry Heights, headquarters of the U.S. Southern Command, to establish a backup microwave link to SCN and an engineer was dispatched to the main Pacific side transmitter and microwave relay site on Ancon Hill, just above Quarry Heights.

As the time for combat action drew near, electronic news gathering (ENG) teams were formed and deployed to various locations. An SCN news team covered the midnight swearing-in of President Endara and the Panamanian government which had been democratically elected in May but not allowed to take office by General Manuel Noriega and his PDF.

Once hostilities commenced during the early morning hours of December 20th, SCN, using its mobile van and

ENG teams, supported the Pentagon Media Pool as well as its own broadcasts with video and audio of the deployment of both in-country as well as U.S. based forces. Using its microwave antenna, the news video and audio was fed by the van to a satellite uplink back to the U.S. and to the SCN studios at Fort Clayton. In coordination with the Public Affairs Office of the Southern Command, SCN began a continuous feed of local announcements and reports, and provided all available stateside media coverage. This kept rumors at bay, provided up-to-date information on local personnel movement limitations, and provided continuous news coverage of combat and political activity.

With the help of reports provided by the U.S. media, especially the Cable News Network, which were received by SCN's 11 meter programmable satellite antenna, the American audience was never out-of-touch with the action in Panama, and with the stateside and worldwide reaction to Operation Just Cause. In fact, SCN was the only radio or television station on-the-air in the Panama City and Canal Area during the first days of action. It became clear later that most of the people in Panama; American, Panamanian, and other nationals, were tuned-in to SCN sometime during those days of crisis.

The staff of SCN became combat hardened broadcasting veterans during Operation Just Cause. Their can-do attitude and physical stamina kept them going for 48 and even 72 hours straight without sleep or rest. Colonel Gaylord and his staff succeeded against the odds. A full, detailed story of their experiences and accomplishments was written by Air Force Master Sergeant Bob Autry, who was the supervisor of broadcast operations for SCN during this period, and published by the Army under the title "Just Another Day in Paradise - AFRTS in a Combat Environment".

#### **OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM**

Within three days of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the Navy Broadcasting Service, as the AFRTS worldwide contingency mission operator, began preparations for deployment of its four contingency broadcast vans to the Persian Gulf area. Within a few days AFIS advised the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) of the AFRTS capabilities and assets available for support of the troops being deployed to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. At the same time, Navy Broadcasting took the initiative to preposition two of the vans at Manama, Bahrain.

By September 5th, only a month after President Bush had ordered the first deployment of U.S. troops to the Persian Gulf area, one of the vans was on-the-air with low powered FM broadcasts at King Fahd International

Airport near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and within a week, two more vans were broadcasting at Al Jubayl and Riyadh. All of these operations, however, operated strictly in a test mode because official approval by CENTCOM was not given until September 19th.

During October, three of the vans, Dhahran, Riyadh, and Al Jubayl, began 24-hour local radio services and began limited television service using low-powered transmitters carrying the SATNET programming. The first crews for these stations were volunteers from AFRTS facilities throughout the world. The first 17 had been assigned to Saudi Arabia on 90-day temporary duty orders and by December they were being replaced by the second shift of broadcasters and technicians. However, the toughest tasks, that of putting these vans on-the-air in the extreme heat and sand of the desert, had been accomplished well and with great speed.

With the decision by the President in late November to build-up the U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia, a small AFRTS headquarters became necessary for establishing a network organization using the existing manned stations and dozens of unmanned low powered transmitters picking-up the signals from the manned locations. Lieutenant Colonel Bob Gaylord, fresh from his experience with Operation Just Cause in Panama, was sent by AFIS to command the new network, with Air Force Captain, Jeff Whitted, as his deputy, and Sergeant Major Bob Nelson as his senior noncommissioned officer. A fourth manned station began full broadcast radio and television operations at King Khalid Military City on December 10th.

The Desert Shield Network's (after January 17, 1991 to be called the Desert Storm Network) toughest task was to find locations for putting-up its many antennas. The one thing that AFRTS did not have available immediately was enough portable and transportable towers to cover such a wide area with low-powered radio and television. After all, the network had to cover a part of Saudi Arabia equal to the area between Illinois, Maine and Virginia. Due to the diligence and ingenuity of its technicians, and much help from the Arab and American Oil Company (ARAMCO), antennas were placed on everything from existing communications towers to soccer field light towers.

By the time the air war started on January 17, 1991 the network had grown from 17 to more than 50 staffers. Of these, 21 came from the Army's 209th Broadcast Public Affairs Detachment (BPAD), a reserve component unit located in Rome, Georgia. With the BPAD came two of the Army's mobile radio broadcast vans which gave the network additional production capability for supporting the growing demand for spot announcements, and as contingency in case one of the Navy vans became

inoperable or if the network had to move or expand. Also with the onset of the shooting war, the network began its own local newscasts. The finished news programs were telephoned back to AFRTS-BC in Los Angeles, and from there broadcast on the worldwide AFRTS satellite system. Since the newscasts were produced at the network headquarters in Riyadh but the other stations were not connected by dedicated broadcast quality communication this procedure made it possible for all the outlets in the CENTCOM theater to pick-up the newscasts via satellite. The amount and length of news programs from the stateside national networks were also increased. Months after the shooting had stopped in early March, the network stations were finally connected to the headquarters, by then moved to Dhahran, with broadcast quality communications.

Meanwhile, on February 11th, the Air Force Broadcasting Service had assumed operational control of the network. The Navy's charter as the AFRTS contingency operator was for six months, and since at that time no one knew how long the war was going to last, it became necessary for the permanent geographic area manager, the Air Force, to take over. The network's name was changed to the Armed Forces Desert Network (AFDN) and Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Randy Morger took over from Bob Gaylord as network commander. At this point the network was serving nearly half a million troops in the desert!

On March 4th, after the liberation of Kuwait had been completed, a two person advanced team arrived in Kuwait City to arrange for broadcasts to U.S. forces in Kuwait and southern Iraq. They were followed the next day by a nine member team with one of the Army vans. Broadcasting began on March 6th from the American Embassy grounds. A couple of days later the station moved to a U.S. camp near the international airport and on March 10th a 5000-watt transmitter began rebroadcasting the station signal which now reached all of Kuwait and southern Iraq.

From March through the end of 1991, AFDN contin-

ued 24-hour manned operations with emphasis on command information for the troops redeploying back stateside or Europe, and planning commenced for eventual unmanned broadcast services for the small residual force that was to remain in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. During July, Air Force Captain Mark Davidson took over command of AFDN with his number one mission being the closing down of all manned operations and the redeployment of most of the equipment. On January 17, 1992, AFDN ceased all manned operations and turned over the remaining satellite delivered radio and television broadcasting systems and equipment to a contractor for maintenance. The history of AFDN had been short but not since the Battle of Britain during the beginning of World War Two could it be said that in war so few had done so much for so many in such little time.

#### NOTES - CHAPTER 25

- (1) Interview with John Burlage, November 25, 1985;  
Interview with Robert Nash, May 13, 1983.
- (2) Burlage Interview.
- (3) Interview with Master Chief Joe Ciokin,  
November 15, 1985.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid; Interview with Robert Jordan,  
September 26, 1985.
- (13) Interview with Bobbie Carleton, December 9, 1985.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Ibid.

## AN ASSESSMENT

No organization can be expected to run perfectly over the short term – let alone for fifty years. The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service is not an exception. Nevertheless, looking back over its existence, AFRTS does seem to have come closer to fulfilling its total mission than many other government organizations – civilian or military. Many ingredients help explain why it's operation continues to be so effective. Central to it stands the legacy of the guidelines established at the birth of AFRTS.

These guidelines grew out of the broadcast experience that Tom Lewis and his original staff acquired from their civilian radio days. They proved equally effective in a military setting. More important, over the years, the early directives remained foundational. That kept the organization from stagnating or losing its direction and purpose.

The guidelines also provided AFRTS with the flexibility of operation, as it endeavored to meet new challenges within a myriad of circumstances. The United States Armed Services at various times acted as a fighting force, an occupying Army or a peacekeeping organization. Those guidelines enabled the organization to incorporate quickly into its missions not only new challenges but new technologies as well. These ranged from various new recording techniques to, most recently, the use of satellite transmission.

Throughout the changes that have taken place, AFRTS has remained a military agency, firmly under the control of the armed forces. As history showed, military regulation oftentimes occurred to a limited degree in the wartime Hollywood headquarters. History also showed that when it combined with the creative chaos required to produce radio programs, it generated what some would call a "special" atmosphere. A tradition developed in which the staff felt an "military" commitment to their audiences, together with a "professional" excitement toward their mission. From deep inside patriotic souls, they gave, selflessly.

Over time, that commitment reached into every network and independent station. It created a dedication among the broadcasters to give their listeners the best possible service – often under trying and even dangerous circumstances.

AFRTS simply hasn't had the resources to acquire every new piece of equipment that came on the market. Despite such practical problems, they've always managed to provide whatever's needed to service American forces

worldwide. The "show went on," whether on an Army base in the heart of Germany, aboard a submarine on patrol, under fire in Viet Nam or Lebanon, in the jungles of Honduras or the hot sands of Kuwait and Operation Desert Storm. More to the point are the broadcast packages. In World War II, they produced "Command Performance" and "Mail Call." Today, they present "Charlie Tuna" or "Don Tracy" on Radio and "60 Minutes" and "Rosanne" on TV. Through it all, the radio and television weekly shipments have broadcast top-quality shows, just like the troops would find if they were listening to the radio or watching TV back home.

Perhaps more than any other nation, the United States has, since the Minutemen of Lexington and Concord, viewed its men and women in uniform as citizens first and soldiers second. As civilian-soldiers, our troops have always participated in the election of their Commander-in-Chief even in the midst of a conflict. Thus, it's only natural that the nation has continued to make a significant effort to keep them informed and to show concern for their morale.

In bringing Frank Capra and then Tom Lewis into the service in those formative early days, General Marshall predestined that the broadcast media should provide education and information to the troops. He believed that they should understand the purpose for which they were going to fight. To carry out this charge, Lewis, the broadcasting genius that he was, knew that he had to attract the attention of his audience before he could present the military's message. That spawned the entertainment side of military broadcasting, and the resultant effect on improving morale. Critical to that mission, the messages of both "I and E" and entertainment (morale) should be presented on the air "by enlisted men primarily for enlisted men."

With his background in commercial radio, Lewis likewise insisted that the entertainment programming should provide "a little bit of home." It should duplicate the same broadcast pastime that the men and women had back there. To maintain the audience, Lewis saw the need to establish credibility in the operation. Though he had to fight to accomplish it, he mandated that the news should be presented without bias or censorship. He also directed that the "I and E" components should keep the troops aware of developments back home. That would prepare them for their eventual return to civilian life.

These are the tenets of Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, as it evolved over fifty years, and as it stands today.

Over the years AFRTS has continued to follow these goals. The guidelines and philosophy have remained operable despite the changing times and circumstances in which American troops have found themselves.

One of the most amazing aspects of the organization's operation remains its ability to obtain radio and television frequencies in foreign countries. They negotiated with the BBC in '43. They fought through oral agreements with the Thai government. They held long discussions with Turkish officials. Through it all, AFRTS managed to gain permission and access to the airwaves in virtually every country hosting American troops.

Whatever the challenges and obstacles, AFRTS has survived. It has maintained its credibility. That's because the upper echelon has recognized how important the broadcast medium has become in providing information and news to the American troops in the field. Within the organization, the broadcasters, technicians and engineers have developed an *esprit de corps* and commitment to their audiences. This has enabled AFRTS to continue operations despite often limited resources and natural or man-made disasters. Always, the primary concern has remained the goal of providing service to its audience.

AFRTS has provided an even broader legacy, one which has benefited the entire nation and will continue to do so. From the end of World War II to the present, former AFRTS staffers have formed the very backbone of the American (civilian) radio and television industry. Many of these people had significant broadcast experience before joining the military, as did many of those who served during World War II. Others, particularly in the

1950s and 1960s, joined AFRTS soon after beginning careers in radio or television. They were able to polish their skills in the service before returning to commercial broadcasting. Still others spent most or all of their military careers working their way up through the ranks of AFRTS, learning all aspects of the broadcasting business. After retirement, those vets accepted positions at commercial or public radio and television stations. Their experiences in the AFRTS enriched their post-war broadcast work on the civilian side. In doing so, they performed for the nation's listening and viewing audiences for years to come.

It's been a glorious history. A proud history, of dedication, of traditions and selfless service. A tradition and service for which some gave the ultimate sacrifice. Through all the need, all the creativity, all the giving, all the work, all the struggle, it's been a history rewarded.

The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service reflects fifty years of devotion, from a crude crystal set in Alaska to a world-encompassing state-of-the-art operation. Today, as five decades ago, thousands upon thousands of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines still echo to them, the compliment of their forefathers:

"Thanks, for bringing us '...a little bit of home.'"  
Stay tuned for the next fifty years!

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